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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF ISOCRATES

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL THOUGHT

BY

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INTRODUCTION

The casual reader of Isocrates, and also the interpreter who wishes to maintain his perspective, must recognize that the most massive proportion of his work is its highly political character. He is the man who writes politikai logoi¹ and who says in summary of his career that he has dealt with "Greek and royal and political affairs."² Isocrates appears, on the evidence of his orations, to have shared the visions, and identified himself with the goals of, kings and statesmen.³ But this most evident of impressions is the very reef on which interpretation of his position founders. Although Isocrates casts his materials in the form of the deliberative oration, that material is hardly of the sort which is conventionally regarded as deliberative; the expressions are more "oracles for the future time"⁴ than plans of action. It is hard to regard him as a member of the great classical tradition of rhetoric which includes Pericles and Demosthenes--geniuses of practical politics. In comparison with them one is forced to conclude that Isocrates is vague, lacking in concreteness, and over-general. What is the alternative when a man suggests as a solution to the complex

¹Against the Sophists 21; Antidosis 260.

²Panathenaicus 11.

³Antidosis 46; Helen 5; To Nicocles 8.

⁴Panegyricus 171.

political situation that plagued Athens in the fourth century a return to the regime which prevailed in the time of Solon?⁵ He is more the man who "stood outside of politics";⁶ and when judged from the statesmen's point of vantage, he is perhaps too doctrinaire. It is thus that those who insist on interpreting Isocrates as a sort of pamphleteer, pandering to the needs of particular situations, are compelled to assess him negatively. And as this mode of interpretation grows in popularity, in like measure the status of Isocrates declines.

But because something in Isocrates seems to compel a more profound appraisal, there is another school which sees him as a theoretician, an opponent of Plato and the Socratics. However, this does little to salvage his reputation, unless a temperate evasion of profundity is regarded as an appropriate response to radical problems. The general statements to which these interpreters point as proof of their thesis are of a commonplace character and seem rather the raw material for the questions which Plato asked about rhetoric and education than answers to them. It is hardly a certificate of Isocrates' wisdom that he recognized that there is no exact science of human affairs but that opinion and judgement are the roots of successful action.⁷ There has never been a sensible man who said otherwise. Such a contention in nowise contradicts Plato, and Isocrates would have been heroically dull if he did not know that his insight was

⁵ As in the Areopagiticus.

⁶ Panegyricus 171.

⁷ Antidosis 271; Panathenaicus 28-29.

shared by all the major classical thinkers. If Isocrates believed that opinion is more important than knowledge it was incumbent on him to establish its status, nor could he have simply left his investigation at the point where his results are simply assertions. If rhetoric conduces to certain goals, the importance of those goals must be elucidated. This is the sort of inquiry Plato made in the Gorgias, and he who does not do likewise is no philosopher. Just as there can be no compromise between Socrates and Callicles, there is no neutral ground between real systematic exposition and inarticulate striving. To assume the general statements of the Against the Sophists are the quintessence of Isocartes' thought is to say that he could neither bear thoughtlessness and conventionalism on the one hand, nor face the rigours of philosophy on the other. Such a view would be a condemnation for mediocrity. Isocrates appears in this view to be holding a precarious balance between rhetoric and philosophy, fulfilling the true function of neither. At this point interest in him degenerates into antiquarian curiosity--curiosity about his role as a teacher, a man who exercised considerable influence in the fourth century, a representative of the ordinary opinion of the time, a foggy idealist.

So we find Isocrates in a no man's land between rhetoric and philosophy--too philosophic for the politician, and too aware of the immediate and the changing for the philosopher. All that can be maintained when he has been put through the strainer--the common ground of agreement among scholars--is that he was an extraordinary stylist. Isocrates' anomalous position is the consequence of the fact that when he is looked upon as an advocate of the same pursuits

as Demosthenes, he is found wanting; and when he is measured up against Plato, he appears trivial. Because he has eluded pigeon-holing, his thought is almost never taken seriously anymore. Plato and Demosthenes are secure in their positions because they are too obviously what they are to be completely misapprehended. It is possible, however, that his assignment to limbo is not entirely the fault of Isocrates but that it is our categories which are not quite appropriate. Perhaps there is some third pursuit which might comprehend the activities of such a man. It is rare that an attempt is made to understand Isocrates' doings as he himself conceived of them rather than applying ready-made our categories and the conceptions they entail, of philosophy and rhetoric.

The interpreter, who wishes first to find out about Isocrates himself, meets many problems. The first aspect of the difficulty is that orations, simply because they are orations, are only partial expositions of a man's reasoned view of the world. They are necessarily incomplete as they are directed to one particular subject or audience. The whole can be reconstructed only from a view of the whole, and that whole is not supplied by an oration as oration. It is not entirely different from trying to reconstruct the views of a dramatist who emphasizes different things from play to play and character to character. How closely any passage may be identified with the author's own opinion is always a question. It is not a sure thing to say that Hamlet is Shakespeare; nor can the views of Socrates in the Protagoras be regarded as identical with Plato's own final views. Similarly, it is not justifiable to accept as final Isocrates' statements in conventionalized speeches to the Athenian

assembly. This is not to say that Isocrates falsified. But it is not to be expected that his more weighty thoughts--those thoughts which might qualify some of his political statements--should find their expression in the popular media. Secondly, because Isocrates' end was to make man good⁸ rather than to implement this or that particular policy, it is necessary to understand the specific character of that end to understand why he believes the policies he suggested would conduce to it. His writings do not have that easily apprehensible character granted to those whose goals have a more immediate specificity and clarity. In the case of a man like Demosthenes it is possible to understand his policies in the light of the obvious ends of stemming Philip's tide and the preservation of free Greece. The historical situation and his political role make the drift of Demosthenes clear and one looks for no theoretical subtleties in him. But Isocrates stood outside of political life and attempted to change its whole course. The historical events of his time are not sufficient to define his end but only provide the special setting. It is necessary to discover toward what goods he was looking in order to know why he chose the topics he did. The problem is to attempt to think as Isocrates thought, and this community of vision is not facilitated in his case by any available historical guide lines which in so many other cases help to chart a true course.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that Isocrates appears to have been a complex and subtle man. For example, his most famous speech, the Panegyricus, with pomp, ceremony, and

⁸Demonicus 4; Panathenaicus 87.

the grandest style of rhetorical prose exhorts the Greeks to a pan-Hellenic war against the Barbarians. In a parallel speech he tells Philip of Macedon that he writes it to demonstrate that to talk to the audiences of panegyrics is to talk to no one.⁹ Or, in the Panathenaicus, Isocrates explicitly undertakes a praise of Athens. He uses, though, a most curious technique of praise. He attempts to defend Athens against the possible charges a Spartan could make. Isocrates answers the allegations, which he himself brought up, by pointing out that the Spartans had done things much worse themselves, thus implicitly admitting the Athenian indecencies. The result is a devastating indictment of Athens. What all this means is hard to say. These factors, partly in the nature of Isocrates' purposes, partly in the nature of rhetoric, make him a first rate problem of textual interpretation, deserving of most careful consideration.

I should contend that Isocrates can never be used, even for historical information, until he is adequately understood. Accurate historical scholarship demands no less. The assertion that Isocrates expresses any attitudes or positions that we know from other sources depends ultimately on our understanding of what Isocrates was driving at. To say, for instance, that Isocrates believed in the historicity of demi-gods (and that it is therefore likely that others did too) implies that the interpreter knows to what rhetorical purpose Isocrates used his reference to them. In such an instance it is possible that he is quite serious, or that it is a manner of speaking, or that he is merely using commonly respectable beliefs

⁹Philip 12.

as a device to some more profound purpose. This requires a more complete knowledge than we at present have. If the past is not to be a great mass of unarticulated facts from which each age and each prejudice reconstructs an account according to its peculiar preoccupations--be they religious, intellectual, or political--such studies as this are basic. Isocrates is a valuable source, but a problematic one so long as his purposes, content, and techniques are not thoroughly divined. I shall attempt to make some contribution to this understanding simply by an analysis which attempts to interpret Isocrates in his own terms, without relating him to others or to what was going on in his times, except insofar as he himself points to such outside sources. It is an attempt to establish more firmly Isocrates' intent and protect him from the random raids that plunder only a part, if any, of his wealth. It is an attempt to discover that Isocrates whose influence is so often mentioned but whose reality is so little investigated.

CHAPTER I

THE CITY

A

The most obvious question that intrudes itself on the modern reader is why Isocrates, a man who was at the least quite reflective, always analyzes events and policies in political terms--shunning economic, social or historical interpretations? This is a problem that arises in the serious reading of any of the great classical texts, and it is to a large degree because Isocrates is a peculiarly clear example of this preoccupation that he is of continuing interest.

It is to be first observed that Isocrates saw political life as the humanizing element in the life of man--that which separates men from beasts. It is not that living in cities prevents men from behaving like beasts toward one another, but that something new, that does not exist prior to civil society, comes into being along with politicization. Man has a positive political faculty which, if it does not reach its fulfillment, makes life not worth the living. Just as nature seems to compel man to procreate, similarly she compels him to join in political community. The polis is a common way of life, a way of life qualitatively different for its individual participants from that which could have been attained separate from it.¹

¹It is a dominant theme throughout Isocrates that the way of man is the way of the city, that man's potential for good or ill

Isocrates could not see that men could be comprehended humanly apart from such an association, and so he was unable to conceive of law as simply setting limits to drives which antedate it, for the purpose of the maximal gratification of those drives.² A man so conceived would be lacking something, a body without a head. And it is so that Isocrates can never take seriously an interpretation of freedom as a tendency to be a-political, to do what one wants, and of law as simply restraint of that bestiality which would prevent any coexistence at all. Since law educates rather than restrains, since it defines a way of life, freedom is the capacity to use law as opposed to a slave's inability to participate in the activities that make a man truly free. Freedom can never be the only pole of orientation because the very process of becoming a man presupposes limitation of certain potentials, which limitation when expressed in institutional form is law.³ Politics is not merely a protective adjunct of humanity, but coextensive with it. The other terms, like economics, are comprehended by politics, inasmuch as they represent a fragmented part of the need that establishes civil society. To analyze this aspect separately would be to misunderstand it.

is developed by the sort of rearing he has had, and that that rearing relates to his city. Only reading of the text of Isocrates can fully prove this point, but the Areopagiticus is a good sample of Isocrates' belief that the city is natural and that man's human qualities only attain their fulfillment from it. He never considers the alternative that the city is only conventional and does not arise from the direction of the nature of man.

²Panegyricus 78; Areopagiticus 41; Panathenaicus 144.

³Areopagiticus 20.

The problem inherent in this understanding of political life would most likely express itself to the contemporary mind in this form: Isocrates gives to the state the attributes which are ordinarily conceived to be functions of society--society in this context understood to be the moral, cultural, artistic, religious, and racial framework in which men happen to live, while the state is the constitutional political organization. Now it is a commonplace that the Greek polis was a combination of these factors--that it was both state and society. The polis is understood to have swallowed up the independent factors which the milieu provides for the socialization of individuals. But to apprehend Isocrates rightly, it is crucial to realize that he recognized no such distinction between state and society as valid. The polis is to him a natural unity and this distinction does not cut it at the joints as far as he is concerned. The aspects of life defined under the general head of society he would consider the results of the politeia⁴--the dominant regime--rather than legitimately independent factors.⁵ That certain institutions, such as the production of consumption goods, are considered to be exempt from legal control at any time, he would in nowise regard as decisive in proving the necessity of the distinction. He would say that the assumption that this activity is therefore essentially nonpolitical was due to an inadequate, somewhat rigid and

⁴This term will always be expressed in a transliteration from the Greek inasmuch as it is one used with considerable subtlety of intent, and its translation would entail the arbitrary choice of one English word when actually it has no exact English equivalent. Politeia is the most important term in Isocrates' political thought.

⁵Areopagiticus 28.

formal, definition of the state and the law. And, in addition, though such independent institutions exist, their autonomy is made possible by their position's being defined by habits and tastes which are the results of the politeia; and when those habits and tastes change, or situations change, the institutions are necessarily re-defined and even subject to positive law. That complete freedom of speech is a right is only feasible when there is ingrained in the citizen a distinction between freedom and licence; and when that discretion fails, authority is requisite. Any attempt to demarcate really separate and completely independent areas, free from political influence, would be doomed to constant reformulation. And when such an area succeeds in establishing itself as such, there is treason in the heart if not in deed.

In the discussion of political matters Isocrates almost inevitably returns the argument to the question of the politeia. He says of it:

For the soul of a city is nothing other than its politeia, having as much power in it as wisdom in the body. For this is what counsels about everything, protecting the good things and fleeing from misfortunes. It is necessary that the laws, the rhetors, and private men become like to it, and each man fares just as this is disposed.⁶

It is, therefore, of the first importance to determine accurately what he means by politeia. It is a difficult term to analyze because it contains reminiscences of several aspects of social life that are not today ordinarily grouped together. Its most immediately sensible aspect is that a politeia is a constitution--the form of government. But the emphasis is more on the substantive side,

⁶Areopagiticus 14.

what the actual distribution of power is, than on a body of rules and formulae. It is not a written code. The sovereign body of citizens, the politeuma, is identical with the politeia.⁷ As politeiai differ so the sort of people who exercise rule differ, and the ways of life of everyone in the city differ. For example, Sparta with its timocratic constitution used only a small portion of its inhabitants as citizens. The rest cultivated the land and were purveyors to the needs of the ruling class. At Athens, since there was a democracy, the citizen body was much more extensive, and people who would have been doing the plowing at Sparta sat daily in the courts of justice. Different regimes tap the resources of different men, thus organizing the lives of both citizen and non-citizen. And it is here that the nexus is made between state and society. Isocrates believes that the way of life of the city is dependent on the politeia. In a sense the politeia is the way of life of the city. In fact, "way of life" would be a reasonably good rendering of the sense of politeia if it did not lack that political connotation that is central to Isocrates' intention.⁸

Now this becomes intelligible when one reflects that the modes of life people pursue, their goals, are to a great extent determined by what is respectable in their community, by what they look up to--the community ideals. The tendency is for the actual holders of power to represent those things which are honoured and

⁷Areopagiticus 78.

⁸To see this in its fullest clarity one must read the entire Areopagiticus and Panathenaicus 112-155, bearing in mind that Isocrates constantly relates the many diverse factors he brings up to the politeia.

this exercises an extraordinary power in orienting the lives of people.⁹ In a militaristic community, the sorts of practices and the people respected are likely to differ tremendously from one in which commercial or religious values are dominant. The politeia has a dual effect--it sets up the goals to be pursued and the habits to be practiced; and, at the same time, it naturally tends to select the sort of men who are to be powerful and honoured, because they excel in those pursuits. When Athens became a sea-power and masses of rowers for the boats were desperately needed, a new class of individuals became the basis of her power and the politeia went through a radical transformation.¹⁰ The new strength embodied in the common people forced a revision of the concept of citizenship. The qualities of those who could perform these duties became the community standards. Each politeia is characterized by its particular goals and is so directed towards them. Thus it is comprehensible how Isocrates is able to think of political influences as broadly as he does. For the politeia to be so all-embracing does not require a totalitarian character, but in large measure this is achieved by the unconscious effects of custom and habit. Any one who knows small, closely knit towns is aware how little actual pressure from authorities is necessary to produce the ordinary sort of conduct that is customary there. But what Isocrates insists is that the peculiar character of that customary conduct is the effect of the ruling groups. He would admit that in certain cases there are conflicts among respectable pursuits, but he would regard such a politeia as

⁹To Nicocles 31; Nicocles 37; Demonicus 36; Areopagiticus 27.

¹⁰Panathenaicus 115-116; Peace 79.

of a mixed character, implying certain ultimate clashes of interest. In that rare instance where a city has no recognizable character of any sort but conflict and change are all that can be discerned, Isocrates would judge that the politeia was moribund and the polis ripe for tyranny. The politeia no longer represents the true balance of power in the community, and re-organization with its attendant dangers is unavoidable. It is for essentially this reason that he rejects the large political community--it is too unstable.¹¹ The mass community offers too many possible sources of change, is somewhat beyond the natural range of men's powers. The citizens of a regime must be as it were face to face if it is to exercise its full influence. Otherwise men in their search for a good life are left to cope with all sorts of extraneous influences on their own, some good, some bad. But Isocrates would assume, men being what they are, that the preponderance of random forces would be bad. A politeia which is forced to abandon its true function of educating its citizenry is per se a bad one.¹² Ultimately the unintegrated factors must return to plague it. He thus describes the corrupted regime of fourth century Athens:

Due to its size and the multitude of those living in it, our city is not easily grasped by the eye, nor clearly: but just as a winter flood, whatever it happens to catch up, it carries away, whether it pertains to men or things, and in some cases it establishes an opinion of it contrary to what is fitting.¹³

The politeia is responsible, in his eyes, for the whole. Man is

¹¹Peace 89.

¹²Areopagiticus 20, 37, 43, 46-49.

¹³Antidosis 171-172.

a social animal and he realizes his necessary and proper end through political life. The way in which he is civilized, the sort of regime in which he is moulded, will be the factor which differentiates him from other human beings. Their politeiai set the horizons on men's hopes and desires, and form their practices.¹⁴ It is their politeiai that separate Greek from Greek and Greek from Barbarian.¹⁵ The strand of hate and contempt for the Barbarians that runs throughout Isocrates is to a large measure explained in this way.

It is not possible for those who are reared and governed in this way to partake in any other form of virtue or set up trophies over their enemies in battles. For how could a clever general or a good soldier be produced in those habits of theirs. Most of them are part of a disordered mob and unexperienced in dangers, unserviceable for war, better educated for slavery than are our own servants. Those who are in the greatest repute among them have never lived equally, or in common with others, nor politically, but they go through all their lives acting insolently toward some and slavishly toward others--in this way men can most quickly corrupt their natures. Their bodies are luxurious on account of wealth, their souls poor and slavish on account of monarchy. Presenting themselves at the palace and prostrating themselves, they practice every manner of small mindedness; kneeling before a mortal man and calling him a god, they take more lightly gods than men.¹⁶

The Barbarians did not participate in what might be called the Greek idea, and their semi-bestiality, their privation of humanity, merited much the same sort of war which men wage against beasts. The great opposition between Greeks and Barbarians consists in the fact that the former are civilized and the latter are not. It would not be fair to say that Isocrates blindly followed an ethnocentric tradition when he judged the Barbarians. His position is reasoned

¹⁴Philip 127.

¹⁵Panegyricus 16, 151.

¹⁶Ibid. 150-153.

and he admits the potential of the Barbarians for good government when he points out that the Carthaginians are among the best governed of peoples.¹⁷ But as he knew the Barbarians, they were by and large the worst governed of men. And the fact that the Persians had never created any decent political life for themselves indicated to him that their natural potential was somewhat lower than that of the Greeks. Virtue did not come easily nor without force to Barbarians.

Isocrates sees the same sorts of citizen bodies as likely to choose the same courses of action.¹⁸ It is analogous to the case of men of the same class, profession, and schooling. Their choices are prone to bear something of the same stamp. The task of political thought is to discuss reasonable ends of conduct and relate them to the sorts of ruling class possible and available. It is for this reason that laws have a much lower dignity than politeiai for Isocrates. Laws act as means to ends, and the justification of those ends is prior to a decision concerning the justice of the laws. An equalizing tax can only be properly judged after the social value of equality is determined. And similarly with the most interesting cases. Because something more basic is the constant point of reference, the theoretical status of law is somewhat depreciated in Isocrates; and for this reason political science can never be the study of laws and institutions alone but rather of the forces that articulate these factors. He says of the old Athenians, men of a good polis:

¹⁷ Nicocles 24.

¹⁸ Areopagiticus 78.

They thought that it is not from laws that progress toward virtue is made but from the everyday practices of life. The majority turn out similar to the habits in which they are educated. Further, they thought that where there is a multitude of exact laws it is a sign that that city is ill governed; for it is in building barriers against wrong-doing that they are compelled to legislate many laws. Those who are governed rightly need not fill their stoas with written laws but only need justice in their souls. For cities are well governed not by decrees but by habits; those who have been badly reared will dare to transgress even exactly written laws, while those who have been well educated are willing to remain within the limits of simple injunctions.¹⁹

The importance of the politeiai to Isocrates is well illustrated in the Areopagiticus, and a careful reading of it in this regard is instructive. It purports to be about the public safety.²⁰ This was the most important sort of speech that could be given in the Athenian assembly, and this title was usually invoked at times of the most serious crises, like invasions, plagues, etc. Isocrates thus sets the speech in the most noteworthy possible situation--one which was likely to gain the entire attention of all the Athenians. But in this case there is no war or revolution. On the contrary, instead of the audience having its attention already rooted to the manifest threat which was the ordinary occasion for such discourses, Isocrates even feels constrained to turn the gaze of the assembly toward the problem which motivated his coming forward--a problem which had not even occurred to most of his auditors.

He describes what he considers to be their shaky position and then says that it is no accident of circumstance but that "we do and suffer these things fittingly. For nothing can turn out aright for those who do not counsel about the whole of government,

¹⁹ Ibid. 40-41.

²⁰ Ibid. 1.

for even if they should succeed in some actions either through chance or the virtue of a man, a short time later they are again in the same difficulties."²¹ It is the politeia which counsels about the whole of government and it is this which must be changed if there is to be an improvement in the conduct of affairs. The result is that the public safety depends on the politeia, and this is the lesson of the Areopagiticus. What appears to be at a far remove from the practical situation to the men of action is basic to that situation. Isocrates then goes on to describe the rudiments of a better regime and after that shows what the results of such a change would be. They range from the very general things that one might expect to result from a change in regime to the modesty of boys, the conduct of slaves, and the attitude toward wealth. Everything that is at all interesting in the action of cities and the habits and attitudes of men is caused by the politeia. As the soul, and not the limbs, is the true cause of action, so the politeia is the true cause of a city's acts. This is the organization of the Areopagiticus and a similar structure can be unearthed in almost all the other political orations.

So it is the politeia to which we must look in interpreting all of Isocrates' political thought since this has a definite causal eminence that is shared with no other factor. It is an instrument not only of theoretical interest but is also practical--politeiai can be changed. For the better, possibly only in rare circumstances; but a regime is a politically tangible factor. This

²¹ibid. 11.

means that when things are going badly in a city or men are degenerate, the cause is easily ascertainable, and improvement is within the grasp of possible human action.

The understanding of the use of the concept of politeia is the sine qua non for the understanding of his whole work. In the first place, once the fundamental character of the regime for Isocrates is discerned, it becomes apparent that he is in this respect no different from the other fourth century political philosophers--notably Plato and Aristotle. Their interest was much the same and they too felt it was necessary to look first to the regime. Their particular suggestions all actually relate to the establishment of a good politeia. When Isocrates suggests a particular reform in naval policy or education, it can always be traced to a stricture on the contemporary regime and the suggested reform would actually entail a change of politeia to be effective. The regime provides the integrating concept for all the particulars, and if it is not referred to, the intent of these particulars is misunderstood. It is, perhaps, for this reason that Isocrates' speeches have their somewhat abstract tone that seems not quite germane to the usual content of the deliberative speech. He uses a form and subject matter of popular discourse and shows by his use of them that the ordinary sorts of discussions point of themselves to issues more remote and correspondingly more profound. It would not be totally dissimilar if an intelligent modern political thinker were to use the form of the newspaper editorial to express problems deeper than those usually expressed in editorials in order to indicate that theoretical questions lie behind all practical discussions. Such a form would

be immediately involving to the reader, drawing him more effectively into an understanding of the relevance of the problems, and would at the same time afford an example of the way in which such questions of political philosophy arise. Isocrates uses the political speech, the ordinary form in Athens for raising questions concerning the common good, to show that these questions must be handled more profoundly. Thus he uses the conventional materials in an unusual way and lays himself bare to the charges of not taking seriously enough certain ordinary things and putting too much emphasis on irrelevancies. It is for this reason that it is incumbent on the interpreter to exercise his prime virtues, care and caution, to an even fuller extent than usual in rooting out every strain of prejudices in the determination of Isocrates' intentions.

Secondly, the insight into the importance of the politeia for Isocrates implies that he was looking for the regime that is good, and that what he was really proposing can be found in those regimes which he praises. He said, in the passage quoted above, that the politeia has as much power over the city as wisdom over the body. It is here that the wisdom, or lack of it, is to be found in political life. The establishment of the regime is what admits of human forethought. Also, because politics provides the fulfillment of man, because humanity only awakens with the creation of the polis, man's excellence as man is intimately connected with the politeia. The virtues of a man can no more be understood divorced from the city than the virtues of an implement divorced from its use. The demands of a virtuous man can be met within a possible political community, and there is no necessary conflict between the state and

the individual. The politically virtuous politeuma, citizen-body, is simply individual virtue writ large, so that the conception of the good man is essential to that of the good politeia. There can be no distinction between public and private virtue in Isocrates, nor is the polis conceived of as pursuing goals separate from the good of its individuals. Politics demands the consideration of the "small morals."²² The search for the good life, insofar as it can be found in political life, is only a search for that citizen body which is prone to plan and live in the best way.

B

The keystone enquiry is, therefore, what is a good regime for Isocrates? He says in the Panathenaicus:

I say that there are only three forms of politeiai, oligarchy, democracy, and monarchy. Of those who live in any of these regimes, as many as are accustomed to establish in their magistracies and the leadership of affairs the most competent of the citizens, those who will best and most justly conduct their business--these will under all politeiai live well both among themselves and in relation to others. But those who use the boldest and basest citizens in their offices, those who will not in any way consider what is beneficial for the city but are ready to suffer anything for their own aggrandizement--the cities of these men will be governed in harmony with the villainy of their leaders. Those others who act like neither the first nor the second groups, but who, when they feel bold, honor those who speak for their favor; but who, when they are afraid, run to the best and wisest--such men will fare alternately badly and well.²³

There are, then, three sorts of regime each admitting of two forms--one simple, the other mixed with the rule of the best--aristocracy. The simple variety is characterized by the rule of private interests or the interest of class; whereas the second is notable for its

²²Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan (London, 1651), Part I, chap. xi.

²³Panathenaicus 132.

public spirit, for men who care about the whole city. The aim of all good politeiai is to give the honours to such men and see that justice is done the rest of the citizens. Isocrates thus concurs with the Socratic formula of the rule of the virtuous. He sees a certain sort of man as being capable of identifying his interests with those of the state. It is essential that such men rule.

But it must be asked whether one of these three regimes is most prone, by the nature of its institutions, to choose good men for its rulers. There must be an institutional expression for the virtue of men if there is to be any stability to a regime. This is peculiarly difficult, for while wealth and birth are relatively easily ascertainable, no test for virtue has ever been satisfactorily devised.

To see more clearly what Isocrates implies when he distinguishes the two phases of a politeia, the public spirited and the corrupt, one need only watch him in action speaking to the Athenian demos in the assembly when dealing with the history of the Athenian politeia. He always sets the two extremes of political organization--the absolutely virtuous and the completely decadent--in an Athenian setting. The good regime is that democracy of Athen's heroic past; the bad, the democracy of Isocrates' own fourth century. He paints an eloquent picture of himself ascending to the platform, the archetype of the wise adviser, begging sufferance from a crowd which listens to those alone who speak according to its desires. Here, in the act itself is a demonstration of what Isocrates speaks about when he defines a politeia that will fare ill because it follows the chance whim of an undisciplined crowd rather than accepts the guidance of the wise.

. . . although it is proper that you be equally as serious about the common good as about your private good, you do not have the same judgment about the one as the other. For when you take counsel about private affairs, you seek advisers of greater intelligence than yourselves. But when you assemble in behalf of the city, you distrust and envy such men, and you cultivate the most depraved of those who come forward to the platform and you prefer as more democratic the drunk to the sober, the witless to the wise, and those who divide up the city's things to those who provide liturgies from their private substance. So that it is well to wonder at anyone who hopes the city will advance to better things while it makes use of such counselors.²⁴

This is a perfect example of what Isocrates has described: a city which has somehow made the distinction between private business and public duty. Office has become a source of private enrichment rather than a burden imposed by a sense of duty. Tyranny is only the most brazen expression of this embrace of the profitable, this complete rejection of the obvious good which doesn't even make hypocritical bows to proper form.²⁵ Because men find office desirable in such a regime instead of having it foisted upon them, the sort of men who desire personal enrichment make up the great majority of those available. And the men who are successful in attaining power are those most skilled at ingratiating themselves with the electorate. Inasmuch as there is often a tension between popularity and following one's conscience, those who are the least scrupulous are likely to carry the day. And since public policy depends upon the formulations of the men who hold high office, the actions of the city will not be oriented toward the beneficial but towards the popular and the profitable. The great bane of politics is the occurrence of motivations incidental to its ends and a good regime will be organized in such a way that the selfish forces will be kept to the barest minimum.

²⁴Peace 13.

²⁵Ibid. 91.

The better sort of men, simply because they are better, become subject to a good deal of distrust. The demagogues fear them and realize that they are well understood by such people. The demos distrusts the gentlemen because they do not strive to please and sense that they are not in full accord with the regime.²⁶ And this distrust is not totally unfounded in fact since in spite of their restraint, the gentlemen cannot but hope for a better regime and at the same time they recognize they are personally endangered. Isocrates, in the Antidosis, tells the story of Timotheus, the greatest soldier and statesman of fourth century Athens.²⁷ He was a paragon of all the gentlemanly virtues; he had won many notable victories, and had greatly improved the reputation of Athens among the Hellenes. But he possessed neither the capacity, nor did he have a desire, for the qualities of a popular democratic leader. The result was that he was convicted of malfeasance and received a tremendous fine. The class of which he was member found no outlet for its important talents nor was it even protected in its very existence. There was a positive feeling against it. This very fact was enough to indicate to Isocrates that there was something wrong and that it was necessary to devise a regime which could protect the rights of such valuable men as Timotheus.

Isocrates himself stands as an example of the absence of wisdom in these times. The best indication of this is that his summary of his life's work is in the form of a defense before the Athenian demos. It seems he thought that the most suitable way of

²⁶Ibid. 133, Antidosis 315-317.

²⁷Ibid. 101-139.

telling about his own contributions was to make the exposition supposing a situation in which his life was in jeopardy. This in itself almost expresses his relation to Athens. But it is even more adequately expressed when he tells of the personal defects that kept him out of politics. He says several times that he did not have sufficient daring for an active political career.²⁸ This is usually taken to be a personal confession and mean just what it says. One thus gets the idea of a shy Isocrates turning to his books because of an accidental frustration that kept him from the arena of political ambition. In addition to the fact that this description does not correspond either to the impression one gets of his character from his other remarks about himself, and that he has too lofty a view of his pursuit to regard it as a refuge from something more important,²⁹ one need only look at the Nicocles to see that Isocrates implies something more when he speaks of his lack of daring. There Nicocles says that democracies do not choose their advisers from the most prudent of the citizens but the most daring.³⁰ Daring is not a desirable characteristic in Isocrates' thought; it is a sign of lack of moderation.³¹ It was daring, indeed, that kept Isocrates out of politics. But the defect is Athens', not Isocrates'. It requires daring to go to war, but whether it is wise or not to go to war is not a function of daring to decide. The Athenians demanded the sort of men who had the nerve to adopt all sorts

²⁸Philip 81; Panathenaicus 10; Epistles i.9. viii, 7.

²⁹Antidosis 80-82. 15; Epistles viii. 10.

³⁰Nicocles 21.

³¹Panegyricus 77; Antidosis 89.

of schemes to maintain their power and increase the affection of the people.³² But in Isocrates' view even the best of these men, those who had a genius for clever manipulation and a sense of the expedient, like Pericles,³³ injured the city. And the corruption resulting from their schemes set the stage for men like Hyperbolus and Cleophon and finally for the ultimate of daring--tyranny.³⁴ Isocrates' figure, in this instance, points to what is wrong with the Athenian regime. As long as there is no place for him, the wise adviser, the city is doomed to a perilous existence. The subtlety of expression in this example inducts the reader into an aspect of his way of writing which is essential to understanding him. Any complete understanding of Isocrates must rest at least partly on an interpretation of his use of his own person in various situations. Isocrates speaks of himself quite frequently and this is not mere vanity or personal reflection, but it is purposeful and teaches something in each instance. The real Isocrates would emerge from a comparison of these statements, not from each regarded separately, since they are something more than autobiographical.

That the leaders of the democracy were so depraved does not tell the whole story. In order for the daring schemes of the statesmen to meet with approval, they must correspond with some desire in the people who have to pass judgment on them. The whole city is wont to become like to the sovereign body, it is looked to in all enactments. In Athens the democratic citizen body was sovereign and it is in it that one finds the needs that resulted in the imperial

³²Ibid. 317.

³³Peace 126.

³⁴Ibid. 75, 37-8, 111-113.

policy and the wasting wars which it entailed. The goals of wealth and glory urged the people on and they felt that poverty would be alleviated by such conduct.³⁵ Isocrates sees such motivations as deep and brutally powerful potentials of men. They desire beyond bounds and, if possible, attempt realization without proper calculation of the consequences.³⁶ The rules of justice seem to be flimsy unnatural barriers--literally "the other fellow's good"--and the strength of the temptations causes the tempted to lose sight of the usual outcome.³⁷ The lust for tyranny and the ordinary fate of tyrants are the exemplars of the situation. Athens was suffering the consequences of tyrannical lust in the fourth century and Sparta, formerly the best ordered and most restrained of cities, had expressed similar changes of situation.³⁸ When the walls of law and custom are broken down, men face the world unrestricted and a phenomenon not unlike what is today called anomie occurs.

Limitless desire is incommensurate with a good way of life because it is insatiate. Since political life has a positive educative purpose, anomie for Isocrates is the result of the breakdown of the political function. He constantly reminds us that most men prefer the pleasant to the good.³⁹ This is the most brutal problem in both the education of the individual and the conduct of states.

³⁵Ibid. 91-94.

³⁶To Nicocles 4-6; Peace 30-31, 103-105.

³⁷Ibid. 31-32.

³⁸Ibid. 95-105.

³⁹To Nicocles 42-47; Demonicus 45; Peace 106-113.

To allow men freedom before they have received the caution that Isocrates deems the political virtue is like giving a seven-year-old freedom, simply because freedom is a desirable thing.⁴⁰ Every right implies its own responsibilities, and unless the responsibilities of political freedom can be met, the rights are not inherent either. The truly free man is the good citizen, not the man who can do anything he wishes. For any man who has not been properly trained, the boon of freedom is a trap. ὕβρις is destruction, σωφροσύνη safety.⁴¹

Now it is evident that Isocrates feels that this was the corrupt state of Athens in the fourth century. But how was it that Athens had deteriorated so since the days of the ancestral democracy which had been such a good regime? One must wonder how from such admirable self-control she had shifted so completely to political libertinism. Isocrates suggests that it was because Athens strove for the empire of the sea, and in the Peace he says that she must renounce that desire if her position is to improve.⁴² This analysis is not as superficial as it might seem if one looks carefully at the reasons Isocrates adduces. He does not say that it was a bad thing to fight at Salamis and accept the naval hegemony and that such actions necessarily corrupt men and make them avaricious. Such an explanation would be prudish, and only regarding Isocrates as the most doctrinaire of moralistic sermonizers could impute it to him. He

⁴⁰Panathenaicus 130-131; Areopagiticus 20.

⁴¹Peace 119.

⁴²Ibid. 29, 63-64.

rather says that the empire had the effect of overthrowing the old regime. One must turn to the Panathenaicus to get a real picture of how this actually happened.

. . . while the hegemony on land is fostered by good order, temperance, and obedience and other such virtues, sea power is increased not by these, but by the crafts having to do with ships and the men who row them--men who have lost their own things and are accustomed to providing their livelihood from the property of others.⁴³

The reversal of form at Athens came about because the real distribution of power changed. Salamis, the great glory of Athens, was also her downfall. The co-opting into citizen's rights, which had formerly been the preserve of the hoplite census, of great numbers of men who rowed the boats, provided a newly respectable orientation for political thinking. In order to maintain their power, statesmen had to devise a policy to fit the demands of this newly broadened base of power, and these were the sort of men whose needs required the profits of empire and the relaxation of civic standards. In this sense, the leaders are the reflections of something deeper--the organization of the citizen body. The comparison between Aristides and Hyperbolus expresses the relationship between the ancestral democracy and fourth century Athenian democracy.⁴⁴ Although men like Timotheus did arise in Isocrates' time, their works were carried away by the inevitable undertow exercised by a corrupt regime.⁴⁵

From this point of view it is easy to understand why Isocrates was forced to lay so much stress on the politeia and its

⁴³Panathenaicus 115-116.

⁴⁴Peace 75.

⁴⁵Areopagiticus 12.

dominant influence on all the interesting particulars of civic life. It is easy to trace the tremendous changes in later Athenian life to the decision to take to the sea; and the pure democracy could find its origins in the success at Salamis. It is well to note that Athens in this instance had no choice. The change in politeia was inevitably involved in the struggle for survival against the Persians and the Lacedaemonians. Not to have adopted the naval policy in 479 would have meant destruction; and to do so involved giving some status to the sort of men who rowed the boats. Isocrates clearly recognized this necessity, but he does not say that it was therefore good or desirable. He would say that there are just some circumstances under which men cannot possibly adhere to a good course; and because he is aware of the unfortunate character of the change, he would have insisted upon constant consideration of possible alternatives to each measure which increased the power of demagoguery. He would probably have said that a constant awareness of the tendency might have stayed it somewhat, and he would never have advocated taking one's orientation from the historically expedient. In this instance he saw what was past as best, and he never looked forward to the future as bringing something new and different which could solve the political problem in a way which had never been conceived of before. The future, insofar as it was hopeful, provided the possibility of re-establishing orders that were formerly good; Isocrates never looked forward to a Greek national state or any such innovation. Such changes could not serve the function of human development as well as the polis which was based on certain unchangeable human needs. Although the future might make the polis for all

practical purposes impossible, it could never make it a thing not to be wished for. History cannot, for Isocrates, compel the good.

It is in that past of Athens that Isocrates finds a regime that was good and it is necessary to look there to find the major requisites of a reasonable politeia. And the very fact that it is past hints at one of its most characteristic features. It is an ancestral regime and Isocrates indicates that the old is desirable simply because it is old.⁴⁶ An adherence to law implies a respect for the law-giver who was an ancestor. Therefore the ancestor must have been somehow better than the later men, or else the ancestor's judgment would have no special title to preference.⁴⁷ The ancestors must have been gods or sons of gods, for it is appropriate only for the best to have discovered the best ways of life.⁴⁸ Respect for the law and the community life means that a man must be pious; he must have an ingrained sense of respect for the first things which is expressed in worship of the gods.⁴⁹ Religion is a necessary adjunct of politics and its denial means a reversion to force or constant, aimless change; and piety is that special virtue which has to do with honouring the past. Honouring the present or the future rejects the gods and makes way for licence. Change is politically dangerous both because it breaks down habits that are of long standing and for which it is difficult to find substitutes, and because

⁴⁶Antidosis 82.

⁴⁷Panathenaicus 119-26.

⁴⁸Ibid. 204-06.

⁴⁹To Nicocles 20. At Athens, worship of the gods implied in itself worship of the ancestors, because the ancestors were gods. Panathenaicus 124.

at any particular moment it is less likely to be prudent than foolish. When Isocrates writes a speech for Archidamus, he causes him to argue on the basis of ancient compacts; and Archidamus quotes complicated genealogies for purposes that might well be served by other sorts of arguments. But Lacedaemon is a pious community, and any new policy must conform to the sentiments contained in its origins. Arguments of this type alone can be convincing to such men as belong to the Spartiate. It is not that Isocrates does not recognize the need for change inherent in life. The policies that Archidamus proposes are radical and a speech delivered by a young man was itself something unheard of. But Isocrates does say that an attitude which does not take account of the past and its immense influence is dangerous. The new must be discretely mixed with the old, and this is what Archidamus does when he proposes the unusual in the conventional framework. The emphasis must be placed on the ancestral because it has the more tenuous roots and is easily forgotten under the influence of compelling necessity. The ancestral imparts fear of those aspects of things which are not so readily understood as their desirable qualities. The tyrant can never be a pious man, for piety is the counterpoise of pleasure, and tyrants seek their pleasure alone.⁵⁰

Because piety is so closely connected with the ways of life of this particular community, Isocrates implicitly rules out an ecumenical religion. Ways of life differ of necessity, and a universal religious belief would weaken respect for the polis in which a man lives. Men's loyalties would be divided between a particular

⁵⁰Peace 33-34, 91.

state and a universal religion, rather than strengthened by faith in the gods. If religion is to be the highest, a devotion stretching beyond the community would subordinate the polis. The peculiar differences which characterize the way of life of this particular community must then be regarded as of a lower order of dignity. Thus the devotion to qualities which all men possess would weaken the binding qualities of community custom. The citizens must in a sense regard themselves as "god's chosen people." The influx of foreigners must be forbidden because it sets up opposing ways of life and thus seeds of weakening conflict are sown.⁵¹ The good politeia is essentially xenophobic and homogeneous. Athens of the fourth century had forgotten these maxims and had grown beyond itself. Trust and unanimity can only safely be based on personal knowledge and common training. The polis should be able to be comprehended by the naked eye.

The second great characteristic of the ancestral regime was its justice.

What contributed most to their governing the city well was that of the two recognized sorts of equality--the one that assigns the same honor to all, and that which assigns what is fitting to each--they were not ignorant of which was most useful. They rejected that which considers the good and the bad worthy of the same honors, since it is not just. They chose that which honors and punishes each according to his worth, and with this they governed the city, not filling the magistracies by lot from every one, but selecting the best and the most adequate for each of the tasks. For they expected that the rest would be such men as were the leaders of their affairs.⁵²

A system of distributive justice approving the proper qualities is

⁵¹Ibid 89; Antidosis 171-72.

⁵²Areopagiticus 21-22.

essential for the development of the proper leadership. The implication is that all men are not created equal, that it would be an injustice not to give rewards to those who are objectively more deserving. This does not mean that in a murder case an important man would get judicial preference and greater leniency than an unimportant one.⁵³ Isocrates asserts, rather, that a conception of civil society which only comprises that sort of justice which settles cases in which equal rights and responsibilities are assumed, forgets one-half of political justice--and the most important part at that. A state which is enabled to do so, he would say, is blessed with distribution of rewards which happens to be adequate; but this is only an accident of the situation and to systematize this by asserting that such controls are not within the natural realm of the state is to generalize from one particular alone. Just as freedom necessarily requires some restraint, Isocrates says that the city is naturally stratified; and to assume that those who happen to be on top always belong there is to play ostrich. Anyone who uses the expression "social justice" understands this. Social justice implies that the rights of men cannot be fulfilled within the somewhat limited modern political framework; its invocation is an attempt to rectify the obvious injustices which a laissez-faire conception of politics engenders. But since so many of the advocates of social justice believe that legal means must be used to impose the new conceptions of what men deserve, it might well be wondered if they are not also reasserting the fact that those things which are termed

⁵³To Nicocles 18.

"social" have a basic political referent. They would seem to imply that any ideology which restricts the authority of the commonwealth in purely social matters must break down when those matters no longer take care of themselves. Since Isocrates did not make the distinction between state and society but attempted to understand social organization as a result of politeiai, the elements today understood as factors in social welfare were as a matter of course included in his analysis of politics. In Isocrates' scheme, this sort of justice is insured by the existence of a leisure class.

In a word, our ancestors decided that the demos, just as a tyrant, should appoint its officers, punish those who erred, and judge in disputes. And those who had the leisure and possessed adequate means were to care for the commonwealth just as servants. Those who served justly were praised and were satisfied with this honor, while those who governed badly got no sympathy but met with the greatest punishments. And yet how could anyone find a more secure or juster democracy than this which placed the most capable men in charge of its affairs and made the demos their master.⁵⁴

Wealth in itself has a certain value and the gentlemanly class has a function to be politically prized. Gentlemen can become thoroughly politicized. Their capacity for constant disinterested attention to affairs and their innate caution serve the polis better than any other class. The gentlemen make up the sovereign body, and their character stamps itself on the whole city. The technical device by which it is assured that this group is dominant is a property qualification for the holders of office.⁵⁵ The demos is willing to accept this because its members are kept busy by their own interests; and since there is no profit to be gained from office and the regime

⁵⁴ Areopagiticus 26-27.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 26; Panathenaicus 145.

is directed to the common good, it is glad to have office held by others who are specially trained for it.⁵⁶ It is foolish to think that Isocrates is a totalitarian in any modern sense. His preference was unquestionably republican. He recognized that no regime could or should last in which there was great poverty.⁵⁷ He would not have accepted politeia in which the rich oppressed the poor and which provided no fulfillment for the wants of the less well-off.

ἡμόνοια--single mindedness--is a constant goal for him. And the regime must be accepted by its members.⁵⁸ There must be reasonable occupations and decent standards of life for all. Isocrates always wanted to rid the cities, by colonization, of the poor. He felt that these situations resulted from the "curse of bigness." He was, however, opposed to luxury because he saw that it, like so many other political extremes, was closely involved with its opposite--poverty.⁵⁹

The third and last major characteristic of the ancestral regime was its moderation. This was the function of education to produce--the self-control that is the pre-condition of freedom.⁶⁰ It is hardly necessary to speak of this virtue here, because the study of fourth century Athens and its lack of moderation points up clearly the political value of moderation. In the olden times the Council of the Areopagus was the means through which Athens attained to her eminence of moderation.⁶¹ It was composed of the most moderate of the citizens and it exercised a paternalistic care over the city,

⁵⁶Ibid. 145-147.

⁵⁷Peace 90; Antidosis 82.

⁵⁸Panathenaicus 148.

⁵⁹Areopagiticus 54.

⁶⁰Ibid. 37, 48.

⁶¹Ibid. 37-48.

directing the young into occupations suitable to their means, even to philosophy, punishing those who did wrong, and watchful of potential wrongdoers.⁶² It saw that habits not laws were the basis of good conduct and attempted to set an example to all. Aeschylus expresses Isocrates' feeling about the appropriate function of the Areopagus when he writes in the Eumenides:

Here, on the hill of Ares,
Once seat and camp of Amazons who came
In anger against Theseus, and defied
From their new ramparts his acropolis
And poured blood unto Ares, where is now
The hill, the rock of Ares--in this place
Awe kin to dread shall hold the citizens,
While their own voices do not change the laws.
This Court, majestic, incorruptible,
Instant in anger over those who sleep,
The Sleepless watcher of my land I set.

The Areopagus was the living symbol of the limits set by the law-giver. Institutions rather than men constituted the basis of this regime's policy; and so wisdom was built in by the wise men who founded it leaving no room for the rash choice or unlawful wish. Piety, justice, and moderation, expressed in a class of gentlemen, resulted in a regime at Athens in which "her citizens lived in accord with each other and at peace with mankind, enjoying the faith of the Hellenes and inspiring fear in the barbarians."⁶³

This question forces itself upon the reader: Can both the ancestral regime and that of the fourth century really be called democracies? It is clear that Isocrates never deviates from this designation, but even the most naive of readers sees the broad differences involved in the regimes and that the description of the

⁶²Ibid. 46-50.

⁶³Ibid. 51-52.

ancestral regime is certainly not that of a democracy in any common acceptation of that term. Even the most conservative form of democracy discussed by Aristotle in the Politics (Bk. IV) is not as far away from the modern idea of democracy as was the ancestral regime. The sort of authority exercised by the Areopagus is alien to Aristotle's statement about democracy, nor does Isocrates speak of assemblies as ever deciding on matters of political policy. Only election would belong to the people. Also, Aristotle recognizes that the most extreme democracy and the limited form, which share the same name, rest on different sorts of citizen bodies. Their connection is only on the basis of a bare analogy. On the other hand, Isocrates has in a most explicit statement said that the difference between a well administered democracy and a badly administered democracy is not a difference between two different politeiai, but rather the difference between the two is caused by the differences in their respective leaders.⁶⁴ This would mean that it is only because of the mere chance that Solon rather than Hyperbolus was the leader of the people in the beginning of the sixth century that the Athens of that time differed from that of the end of the fifth century. The same citizen body, which therefore directs itself towards the same goods, can, in this view, fare in any way at all, depending only on the character of its leaders. This comes dangerously near to Pope's famous maxim, "For forms of government let fools contest; whatever is best administered is best."

If this is the case, the politeia is not really the fundamental political category, since it is possible for the same sort

⁶⁴Panathenaicus 132.

of politeia to be both good and bad. The fact that administration is good or bad would not be dependent on the sort of body which exercises full citizen rights, but other causal factors would have to be sought out. To state the question in its baldest possible form: Either the politeia is the soul of the city or it is not. If it is, the character of the regime is radically dependent on it, and the analysis of such essential political differences as good and bad government must be made in terms of it. If the politeia is not the soul of the city, then such differences as that between oligarchy and democracy are not essentially relevant, but something else must be looked to. Now our previous analysis seemed to prove that the former alternative was correct, but doubt is raised by the fact that Isocrates calls both very good and very bad regimes democracies.

This would seem to invalidate our previous thesis and give us cause to believe that Isocrates believed that the fact of democracy had been constant at Athens but that something else had changed.

However, a closer examination of the text can in no way admit of this interpretation. In the first place, Isocrates several times speaks of the change as one of politeia.⁶⁵ Secondly, it is obvious that the demos in the ancestral regime exercised only limited rights of citizenship, while there were only a few full citizens who devoted their lives to politics. Thirdly, the mention of Lacedaemon as a democracy.⁶⁶ Nowhere else in all of classical literature did anyone dare to speak of Lacedaemon as democracy, and it

⁶⁵ Areopagiticus 57, 59, 62, 71, 78; Panathenaicus 114; Peace 64.

⁶⁶ Areopagiticus 61.

was certainly clear to Isocrates that it was not. In addition, the other famous accounts which we have of the ancestral politeia do not agree that it was a democracy. In a general way, both Aristotle and Plato agree with Isocrates' description of the ancestral regime, but both are emphatic that it was not a democracy. Either the ancestral regime was a democracy, and Isocrates flies in the face of all established precedent; or he for some reason wishes it thought that it was a democracy.

This apparent discrepancy can perhaps be explained by a remark in the Peace which he makes to the Athenians, "You are concerned about the politeia no less than for the safety of the whole city . . ." ⁶⁷ This implies that the safety of the whole city is somehow different and possibly even opposed to the politeia that exists in it--that the short range of interests of the citizen body may be in conflict with the long-term stability of the city itself. Politeiai always look toward some presumed good; they are the expression of their citizens' aspirations. But the conception of what is good depends in large measure on the sort of person who is the citizen. A desirable regime would presumably embody a conception of the good life which conformed to the dictates of reason. Regimes like oligarchy and democracy only express a partial conception of the just; one places too much emphasis on money, the other on merely being alive. In such regimes there is a conflict between the reasonable, or the public good, and the standards of life institutionalized in the politeia and the citizen-body which it represents. The Athenian citizen-body, made up largely of the poor, thought it just to take

⁶⁷Peace 51.

away the wealth of the rich and divide it up among the people, thus destroying the important leisure class. In cases of such conflict, every sensible man would hope for a change in the politeia which would make it possible to attain a way of life more in conformity with the welfare of the whole city. There is, however, a problem here for the man who wishes to advise such a course. The people are as much committed to the regime as they are to the public safety, as is natural since their way of life--their very independence, hinges on it. The citizens of today would no longer be true citizens in the new regime. If one is going to persuade them to accept the course that is for their own and the city's good, then that course must not conflict with their own selfish interest. Selfishness is the irreducible residue which sets the limit to purely rational planning among men, and one of the major tasks of the rhetorician is to overcome it. So, if the ancestral regime had just happened to have been a democracy, then to return to it would not necessitate the people's giving up their treasured democratic privileges. As the Old Oligarch says: "For my part I pardon the People its own democracy, as, indeed, it is pardonable in any one to do good to himself." There is a conflict between the interests of the part, represented in the rule of the demos, and the interest of the whole, as represented in the rule of the good. The only hope of reconciliation is to make the people think that they will lose nothing. The change will require a new way of life for all, and there is always inertia in such movements. But behind the measured expression always lies the truth--"the politeia is the soul of the city."

Isocrates was a rhetorician, and political rhetoric, in his eyes, was the instrument through which the thoughts of the man of knowledge and the intransigence of ordinary selfishness are mediated. It has the purpose of persuading the unwise to accept the wise decision--that is, it implies something superadded to mere truth--if only a technique which makes the truth palatable. If the truth were a readily saleable commodity there would be no need for writing subtle speeches in order to get one's point across. Isocrates even indicates that it is not the discovery of the right course which is so difficult, but getting other people to accept it.⁶⁸ A collection of the maxims of the poets might almost do for a set of precepts for the moral life, but educating people so that they will understand how to use them is the real core of the problem.⁶⁹ Isocratic rhetoric is more than a technique of speech making; it is an understanding of men--their needs and their failings. It attempts to persuade men in the directions of their real needs but it is also constructed with a full awareness of the phenomena of prejudice and selfishness. Isocrates' oratory is suffused with his knowledge of the things men will never accept by words alone, and it must be remembered that there was still the living memory of what had happened to his teacher Socrates.

Therefore Isocrates, in making known the unpleasant truth that a root and branch change is necessary, has to put it in a way that would not make it appear such an extensive change. The word democracy is the sugar coating on the nasty medicine. He publishes

⁶⁸Ibid. 62, 36.

⁶⁹To Nicocles 44.

by this technique the fact that one must speak to Athenians, or any peoples like them, in this way. Again it becomes evident that Isocrates must be interpreted not only by his words but also by his deeds. The old saw that actions tell more about the man than words applies in full measure to Isocrates. His views of the world can best be seen in how he talks to different men--tyrants, democrats, and philosophers. He indicates by the differences what sort of man each is and what he himself would do in dealing with him. The figure that Isocrates presents of himself binds these aspects together.

The whole treatment of the ancestral regime is in this vein. The innocuous fact that it is important to have good advisers is stressed. That the better men should be honored is often mentioned, but that their actually getting honors as a right implies a special sort of politeia and that the real cause of all the trouble is the very people to whom he is speaking is barely hinted at. All the good results are mentioned with the greatest of prolixity, but that a property qualification is required is only touched on twice.

The very clarity of the statement on the forms of politeia is an indication of its rhetorical intent. It simply is intended to demonstrate that Isocrates is not interested in subverting democracy. It fairly invites one to take it seriously. Its intent can perhaps best be grasped when Isocrates says that aristocracy is not a regime but an attitude.⁷⁰ This would seem to say that aristocrats could consistently be democrats. But the key comes when

⁷⁰Panathenaicus 131.

he points out, in a quite offhand manner, that government by property qualification has the same character as aristocracy--is a proneness rather than a politeia.⁷¹ Then we are justified in substituting "property-qualification" for aristocracy where Isocrates speaks of a democracy mixed with aristocracy. As has been observed this property qualification is the major distinguishing factor between the old and the new regime. The practical consequence of this is that Isocrates asserts, to those who would appreciate such sentiments, that a property qualification can be had without sacrificing the democracy.

The effectiveness of this way of stating things is attested to by the fact that many modern commentators have been drawn in by the statement that good counsellors are the key to the goodness of any regime and that each regime is equally amenable to their use. It is a statement that stands out in the text and the reader is immediately impelled to the conclusion that he has found a comprehensive statement about the types of politeia; whereas the truth lies somewhat deeper--the reason for the statement can be found in the sort of audience to which the speech is addressed. These commentators, of course, all know that Isocrates was not an unqualified believer in democracy; but if they think that he believed that there are only three types of politeia, they run the risk of misunderstanding the whole teaching concerning the elements of a good regime. One commentator says about this passage that Isocrates means that the "spirit of the constitution" is what matters. This is to reverse the whole thing--for Isocrates the spirit is a result

⁷¹
Ibid. 131.

of the "constitution." A spirit is an amorphous thing and to create one is practically impossible. Isocrates' teaching about politeia is that such things as spirits are caused by something quite definite which cause is at least potentially amenable to purposeful manipulation by thoughtful men. The idea is that a politeia is quite a precise thing and profoundly practical in its definition. It only requires putting together consistently his statements about the ancestral regime, to recognize that it was a mixed regime. When he calls Sparta, the classic representative of such a politeia, a democracy, Isocrates points in this direction. As Megillus the Spartan remarks in the Laws of Plato:

In truth, stranger, when I reflect on the Lacedaemonian politeia, I am at a loss to tell you by what name one should describe it. It seems to me to resemble a tyranny, since the board of ephors it contains is a marvellously tyrannical feature; yet sometimes it strikes me as, of all states, the nearest to a democracy. Still, it would be totally absurd to deny that it is an aristocracy; while it includes, moreover, a life monarchy, and that the most ancient of monarchies, as is affirmed, not only by ourselves but by all the world. But now that I am questioned thus suddenly, I am really, as I said, at a loss to say definitely to which of these politeiai it belongs.⁷²

This interpretation also explains the violent attitude which Isocrates takes towards oligarchy in the Areopagiticus.⁷³ He says that the Athenians distrust the best men, thinking they are oligarchically inclined. An attack on oligarchy by comparing it unfavorably with democracy is a living demonstration to an audience that Isocrates has no truck with that sort of business. If Isocrates wishes to persuade, then he must establish his character as a

⁷²Laws iv. 712 D-E. cf. Plato, Menexenus 238 C.

⁷³Areopagiticus 62-70.

man to be trusted. This he does by identifying himself with one of the strongest popular feelings of the Athenian demos--hatred of the thirty tyrants. But it is hardly the best oligarchy he could pick if he wished to give a fair hearing to the claims of oligarchy. The "Thirty" were a group of depraved men more like the worst of tyrants than oligarchs. They succeeded in gaining an odium which was felt by all decent Athenians.

The crown of all such passages comes in the Panathenaicus in a bitter criticism of the Lacedaemonians.⁷⁴ He tells how the oligarchical party won over the demos in civil war and enslaved them. Then he injects the remark that they then established "among themselves equality before the law and democracy, such as is necessary for those who are going to have concord for all time." It is a sort of joke. Every group of full citizens is a democracy in that they all have equal rights among themselves. The question is who are the full citizens to be.

To sum up Isocrates' conception of the ancestral regime, it was certainly a different politeia from that of the fourth century. It must be remembered, though, that it was not an oligarchy. It was a regime in which the people had a very basic role--that of election and audit. But it was balanced in such a way as to provide for more than just the mass interest. It left room for some reward according to merit and for the more disinterested rule of virtuous men. In this way it is very much akin to Aristotle's conception of politeia--that specific form which bore the generic name. The demos was not totally bereft of right but it exercised only

⁷⁴Panathenaicus 177-178.

partial citizenship as compared with its position in the pure democracy. The consequence of this is that mixture of forms with some right of wealth recognized is somehow more related to wisdom than the undisputed mastery of the demos. And Isocrates' statement about aristocracy is not totally rhetorical in intent. He thought that it was possible to utilize each of the regimes in such a way that it would act as a support to the gentlemenly class. With one sort of population it is best to gain popular adherence by granting the right of election to the demos, with others not. Such a regime might be called aristocratic democracy. The major goal is, of course, the solid entrenchment of aristocrats and the other factors are prudential considerations looking to this end. In addition, the aristocratic politeiai would resemble one another more than any of the others. In a sense, there are just two broad categories which are interesting to Isocrates, self-interested and public-spirited regimes; although there may be differences under the two heads, they are incidental to the major goals of the politeia.

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The Isocratic judgment concerning monarchy is by no means so easy to disengage as that concerning the ancestral regime. That he considers monarchy important is attested to by the fact that about half of his speeches are addressed to kings and tyrants, and he frequently speaks of the instruction of kings as an important aspect of his life work. We also know from the Panathenaicus that monarchy is one of the regimes which admits of goodness.⁷⁵

⁷⁵Ibid. 132.

The question is how good it can be and what characteristics make it good.

A superficial reading of the orations would lead to the impression that Isocrates' opinion of monarchy is distinctly negative. Throughout he never in his own name in a deliberative speech praises monarchy. In fact, he several times pauses to pass severe strictures on it. Monarchies are fraught with the greatest of dangers and work the greatest of ills on cities. Twice he even distinguishes monarchy from politeiai.⁷⁶

But a second look will suffice to prove that Isocrates, when most critical of monarchy, is speaking of that aspect of it which is known as tyranny. This becomes evident in the Peace where he defines rule as the opposite of tyranny.⁷⁷ Rule is exercised for the ruled, tyranny for the pleasure of the tyrant. A good bit of the rest of the Peace is devoted to criticism of monarchy, with the implicit assumption that monarchy is equivalent to tyranny as previously defined. Furthermore, the unequivocal condemnation of monarchy occurs only in speeches directed to Athens, to which Isocrates' Nicocles alludes as "that city which most hates tyrants."⁷⁸ Inasmuch as Isocrates had to guard himself against even the slightest suspicion of favoring tyranny or whatever smacked of tyranny to the sensitive Athenian demos, it is not surprising that any favorable thoughts he might have had about monarchy had to be suppressed in favor of more conventionally acceptable views. Finally, we have,

⁷⁶Epistle vi. 11, iv. 6. cf. Philip 127.

⁷⁷Peace 91. cf. Ibid. 111.

⁷⁸Nicocles 24-25.

as previously mentioned, Isocrates' explicit statement about the possible legitimacy of monarchy.

We must look more closely if we want a clear statement concerning monarchy. Legitimate monarchy must be something different and opposed to tyranny. It must be a rule characterized by wise counsel directed to the good of the whole; only such a monarchy would conform to the minimal standards erected by Isocrates. He directs himself to the exclusive discussion of monarchy in his speech To Nicocles, a tyrant of Salamis in Cyprus. And here he makes a statement of the problem which includes, but is more comprehensive than, the statements about monarchy in the Peace and elsewhere.

For when they look at the honors and the wealth and the power, everyone considers those who are in the position of monarchs to be equal to the gods. But when they reflect upon the fears and the dangers and when upon investigation they see some destroyed by those whom they least ought to be, and some compelled to wrong those closest to them, and to others both of these things happen, then they consider it profitable to live any sort of life rather than to be king of all Asia along with such misfortunes. The cause of this anomaly and confusion is that they consider that kingship, just as priesthood, is a thing for every man--kingship which is the most imposing of human affairs and requiring of the most forethought.⁷⁹

Thus Isocrates makes it clear that the evil attributes of monarchy are not essential to it but are the results of a fundamental misunderstanding about it. Monarchs must be better men and better educated than others because they are performing tasks that are more challenging. Monarchy is a thing striven for by men, an end of high dignity in the eyes of all men, but the dangers incumbent upon it are commensurate with its desirability. The dangers are to be averted only by education.

⁷⁹To Nicocles 5-6.

This implies that the defect of tyranny as stated in the Peace--that it is for the pleasure of the tyrant not the good of the ruled--will be corrected by education. If this is so, education must bring about a harmony between the ruler's interests and those of the demos. And this, presumably, is Isocrates' function as teacher. He sets down laws for monarchs, makes kings out of tyrants. Isocrates treats the practices of the ruler as equivalent to the politeia, so that if he can change them for the better he has made the monarch more secure and constituted at the same time a better politeia.

Since Isocrates must lay down laws for monarchs, it means that monarchs are essentially beyond the positive law, beyond the forming influence which a good politeia exercises on the development of its citizens. Tyranny implies lawlessness and it would be among the most difficult of tasks to impose a law which has no possible enforcement. This is the root cause of the evils of monarchy. It is by the use of such speeches as the To Nicocles that Isocrates attempts to impose laws on monarchs.

He tells Nicocles that he must be a demagogue to the people, and that this is best accomplished by giving the best honors and providing justice for the others.⁸⁰ The consent of the people is requisite to Nicocles' end--maintaining himself, and the people will accept him if his way of life provides a gentler politeia for them. Now, this distributive justice is much the same as that which characterized the ancestral regime. This being the case, it

⁸⁰Ibid. 15.

must be asked which most satisfactorily fulfills this function. It is easy to answer that there is no institutional assurance that all the difficult rules of kingship will be followed by the ruler and that it is only a matter of chance if the ruler's offspring should happen to be as good as the father who has been just; therefore the regime of old Athens is a much more suitable pattern for the continuing prosperity of a polis. That this is so is manifested by the fact that Isocrates almost never praises kings except those of Sparta, who were kings in the most nominal sense and bound in strictly by law.⁸¹ The only other kings he praises in deliberative discourse are the ancient Athenian kings, who existed at a time when monarchy was the only form of government in the world; and Philip's father, who recognized that monarchies would never do for the Greeks.⁸² It is a very difficult thing to combine the rule of one man with the proper sense of citizenship through which men exercise their capacities as a right according to their merit. Men who live in a herd, frightened of their masters, are unlikely ever to develop the sort of character that is requisite to good political life. The ancestral regime insured that all adequate men would be able to develop themselves to the fullest and provided a solid and loyal base for stable conduct of affairs. Men were neither unruly nor sheep-like.

It would seem from this analysis that Isocrates would be somewhat dubious about the possibilities of good kingship. But the fact is that we never have an explicit judgment about this question given in his own name. He does not speak of the status of monarchy

⁸¹Peace 142-144.

⁸²Philip 107-108.

as a politeia in the To Nicocles, but only of the practices by which Nicocles will rule best. However, in the Nicocles, a speech written by Isocrates assuming Nicocles as the speaker, there is a praise of monarchy. Here Nicocles argues that monarchy is the best form of politeia for three major reasons. First, monarchy can best provide distributive justice in a way that it cannot be provided by oligarchies and democracies which are hampered by notions of equality respectively based on property and numbers. Second, the monarch has an interest in the state just as the master has in the home, which can never be the case in the other politeia which share the rule and thus water down each individual's stake and responsibility. Third, monarchies are best suited for the conduct of war.⁸³

This statement would be convincing if Isocrates had not purposefully put it into the mouth of someone else, and that person a monarch speaking to his people in a situation in which it would have been almost impossible to do anything other than praise monarchy. To say that Isocrates made Nicocles say these things because he himself could not say them for prudential reasons would be to beg the question, for it is just as possible that he is merely demonstrating the sort of thing a king must say. And to analyze the content of Nicocles' argument in favor of monarchy, the appropriate giving of honours is by no means secure unless the king is actually the best man in the polis, a circumstance that is admittedly rare. The question of what Isocrates thought about the status of kingship in relation to other politeiai must remain an open one. All that can be said is that he obviously thought that even its status in

⁸³Nicocles 9-26.

regard to being an admissible form is tenuous, requiring most unusual circumstances. In this case, the spirit of a man is the determinant of a politeia, whereas in other politeiai it is the way of life peculiar to a certain sort of citizen-body. In the latter case the problem is to determine what sort of citizen-body will make decisions most in accordance with the welfare of the whole; in the former, the problem is to find a thoroughly virtuous and able individual.

The issue is further complicated in that the preceding analysis has been based on the assumption that Isocrates accepted the classical distinction between kingship and tyranny. This was justified on the basis of the definition of tyranny given in the Peace. Also there is the letter to Timotheus, ruler of Heracleis, in which Isocrates repeats the principles enunciated in the Peace and says that Timotheus is in a fortunate position because what would have required force and tyranny to gain, he inherited.⁸⁴ This would tend to indicate that Isocrates is trying to convert tyranny into kingship through principle. Isocrates, in addition, cautions Philip to act in a kingly way, not tyrannically.⁸⁵ But doubt is cast upon the validity of this assumption when it is observed that in the To Nicocles tyranny is constantly confused with kingship, and it would seem that no distinction can be made there.

It can, of course, be objected that Nicocles is actually a tyrant and the knowledge of this fact would have been known to the intended audience of the speech, so that it might have been advisable to make tyranny nearly equivalent to kingship. This line

⁸⁴ Epistle vii. 6.

⁸⁵ Philip 154.

of reasoning would be acceptable in the light of the other observations if this were the sole exception. But the question is clouded by the fact that twice Isocrates praises, in most unqualified terms, tyranny and tyrants.

In the Evagoras, a praise of Nicocles' father, Evagoras is frequently referred to as a tyrant. Isocrates says that Evagoras, in getting possession of the tyranny, gained the noblest of things in the noblest of ways.⁸⁶ He says that tyranny is the most outstanding, the most august, and the most striven for of divine and human goods.⁸⁷ Evagoras was tyrannical because he excelled in all the virtues of kingliness. This is certainly a new side of tyranny. Tyranny in other contexts implied what was worst; here it means what is best. In this way, lawlessness is better than lawfulness in that the tyrant is better than laws. Such a man could not have laws laid down for him by Isocrates, and Isocrates feels inadequate even to praise Evagoras. Kingliness would be no additional virtue. A worthy man fulfilled that human desire which is of the greatest dignity--political power.

This paradox becomes most interesting when we read in the Panathenaicus that it was Theseus who established the ancestral regime.⁸⁸ It was Theseus who taught in deed what Isocrates later taught in word--that the soul of every city is its politeia. In this speech Isocrates says that he will not discuss the virtues of Theseus because he has discussed them elsewhere. Thus the reader is directed to the Helen. Now the Helen is an epideictic speech--

⁸⁶Peace 40.

⁸⁷Ibid. 46.

⁸⁸Panathenaicus 138.

literally a show-off speech. It is in such speeches that the rhetorician displays all the pyrotechnics of his craft. These speeches are generally relegated to a minor role in the study of Isocrates and considered to be of only antiquarian interest to the student of Attic oratory--school pieces. But it is in the Helen that Isocrates shows off something that is worthy of the greatest attention in the interpretation of the substantive content of his thought. Theseus is called a tyrant.⁸⁹ He was a good man and justified his position by being the best of the Athenians, but he nevertheless held that most dangerous of all positions--tyranny, essential lawlessness.⁹⁰

We are justified in taking this passage very seriously because Isocrates himself points to it. The pressing problem is whether it is any accident that the ancestral regime was established by a tyrant. This is the question of the origins of a good regime. How is it that one is to establish a regime such as that which Isocrates praises? It has been observed in the discussion of the ancestral regime, that the wisdom imbedded in it must have been placed there by a lawgiver. To establish institutions which have a permanence and really guide men requires a carte blanche--compromise would destroy their essential strength.⁹¹ In the past the gods had this franchise but what about regimes that are to be established in the future? Isocrates is not only interested in the past. One cannot help being reminded of Plato's Laws wherein it is postulated that the transition to a good politeia could most easily be accomplished through a tyranny. This is obviously the case. Where there is

⁸⁹Helen 34.

⁹⁰Ibid. 36.

⁹¹Cf. Plato, Republic 501a.

absolute power, there exists the possibility of bending the ordinarily unbendable. If the tyrant is virtuous, or is willing to listen to a virtuous adviser, then the fundamentals for the transition are present.

This is what Isocrates indicates, and thereby demonstrates that he is no starry-eyed dreamer. It would be a false notion which assumed that Isocrates believed that by a gradual spreading of his form of education things would naturally improve. He knew well that for every good man that grew up in a corrupt community there were ten base men. Timotheus and his ilk were voices in the wilderness; as long as they were by institution kept from exercising their capacities, the only course for the city was downward. Their presence might abate the speed of the plunge, but true amelioration was not theirs to accomplish. Isocrates did not view dissemination of knowledge as an answer when men were only likely to pervert its uses. Truth is in itself weak. Power must be coterminous with virtue, or the likelihood of the actualization of an adequate political community is small. Isocrates does not rely on unconscious processes as the source of the realization of political goals. If on occasion an acceptable regime occurs without conscious direction that is all to the good. But if men are to think about their ends, then they cannot leave their fates to promiscuous chance. They must act according to reason. The full use of reason demands money and force, as Isocrates says to Philip, "the only things which by nature persuade and compel."⁹² It is only at rare times that such devices work anything more than harm, but there are ripe moments. Take, for

⁹²Philip 15-16.

example, the time of the drafting of the American Constitution. There was room for choice--it was a crossroad; men were generally willing to accept the decisions of the convention, and those who were the representatives could call on considerable influence and force. But even this method produced some compromises that were not totally desirable nor noticeably directed toward the common good. If Isocrates were to comment on this, he would have probably agreed with the sentiment of Socrates expressed in the Republic.

When they [the philosophers] take over a city and the characters of men, as it were a slate they first wipe it clean--which is not at all easy. At any rate you know that in this straight off they differ from others, that they will never lay hold of an individual or a city, nor write laws either, before they receive it wiped clear, or they themselves do it.⁹³

And in Athens, where there was neither will nor power to change, words of good faith were of no avail. Knowledge by itself is powerless. It in itself does not insure its own proper usage. A tyrant must teach a population as a schoolmaster teaches pupils--there must be authority. Rhetoric teaches its own limits, and the Areopagiticus is a critique, not a proposal. Isocrates skirts around the issue very respectfully. It is a dangerous but important subject and it is in just such instances that the rhetoricians' own moderation must be exercised to the fullest. The reasons for the style which superficially seems to be for all the world like Polonius' "this above all" become clearer. Isocrates had a mighty mastery of a style which would at worst appear harmless, and at best establish him as similar to the trustworthy Nestor, the clear-voiced Pylian orator.

But such more tantalizing reflections, although they are

⁹³ Plato, Republic 501a.

not for the member of the Areopagus, with his good-willed traditionalism, nor for the vulgar to use as rationalizations for ugly gratifications, are necessary. The sorts of daring actions which Isocrates ordinarily denigrates--the stepping out of the realm of the ancestral--are sometimes the only choice. But the step must be taken carefully, for fear of trampling on cherished institutions.

So tyranny, the basest of human goals, the paradigm of human potential for wickedness, can become the greatest good. Isocrates is the sort of mind who asks questions about his general rules, finds the exceptions, and manages to maintain the rules without losing the instruction that derives from the exceptions. The cautious tone of the orations expresses the general rule, the reserve in favor of tyranny stands, as it were, between the lines; the situation where tyranny would be fruitful is rare, its correlates never can be formulated and only the most extraordinary sort of man is able to appreciate the opportunity and take advantage of it. Here are the things which wisdom discovers and they don't belong in speeches. Only the possibility exists in the speech, and to fill his discourse with talk of the situation at the extreme would have been to distort the true view.

One more thing must be demanded from Isocrates' reticence. He points out several times that Evagoras gained his tyranny justly. In each instance he was motivated to action by some specific injustice or threat against his person. Chance so contrived it that he would have to commit none of the bestialities ordinarily connected with tyranny. And in the case of Timotheus, he inherited from his father what was gained by unjust violence. It must now be asked

whether to achieve the great ends, the positive realization of which at the right moment are the only possible sanction for tyranny, it would be justified to commit unjust acts? Suppose Evagoras has anticipated the appropriate time for winning glory by nobly setting Cyprus aright but had had no personal wrongs done to him. Would it have been wrong to go ahead with his plans anyway? Isocrates hints at this question when speaking of Agamemnon of whom he was not sure whether it had been by election or aggrandizement that he took the power over the Argives.⁹⁴ Did it really make any difference how he did it so long as the achievement was such as it was? This is the point where conventional standards become problematic--it is the twilight zone of morality. Isocrates raises the doubt, as even the most decent of men must, if they are interested more in truth than sermonizing. He was able to see the problem there, nor did he cover it under a veil of sentiment. At the same time he did not take his moral orientation from this most outlandish of enigmas, seeing all political life from this view and admiring his own cleverness at finding ugliness at the base of things. Only at this point and in this way is there a doubt, and the intrinsic value of right action itself is never called into question. It is a dark question and it is fitting that it be buried in the dark interstices of his thought. The doubt raised, Isocrates is not overwhelmed by it. This question must, at this stage of the inquiry, go unanswered. And perhaps it is better that it be so.

⁹⁴Panathenaicus 76.

CHAPTER II

PAN-HELLENISM

It is with a sigh of relief that the modern reader leaves the constraining atmosphere of Isocrates' reflexions about the city--that city which made so many demands on its citizens and was so irrevocably in the past--to turn to the glorious air of his "ideal," the marshal trappings and pageantry of his pan-Hellenism. It is here at last that Isocrates urges the Greeks to do something, and something which can be done. He seems to forget that part of his work which is so reminiscent of the post-Peloponnesian-war melancholia with its nostalgic yearning for the ordered and controllable past which so strongly marked his contemporaries, Plato, Xenophon, and Aristotle. And it is on this base that he has established his repute as a practical man; he not only settled himself in an acceptably humble posture before the edicts of History, but he helped History along its inevitable course by divining, if not its inscrutable ends, at least the trend it was destined to follow. Isocrates wrote passionately throughout his long life of his ideas for a great new war against the Barbarians. He transcended the narrow partisanship of a Demosthenes and he appears to turn his back on the Platonic "ivory tower." He occupied himself with the most general interests of Greece and looked to the future of its civilization rather than to the preservation of any outmoded order. It has been said that he provided the ideology for Alexander.

The foregoing paragraph expresses, in sum, the first, and often abiding, impression that the thoughtful modern reader has after having read the great pan-Hellenic speeches of Isocrates, and it is to a careful examination of the import of those speeches and the justice of this impression that this chapter is to be devoted. The pan-Hellenism of Isocrates is the most striking element of his extant works for many reasons of which the most obvious is that in terms of both quantity and quality it is outstanding. But there is another and somewhat subtler reason for the modern preoccupation. We moderns have a much more radically historical orientation than that of any epoch in the past and we are inclined to judge civilizations and men not so much in regard to their explicit claims about themselves or opinions about one another as in relation to the effects or results of their actions. We see them as unconscious actors in a great drama the denouement of which they are themselves unaware. The importance or even the sense of their roles can only be understood by those who live long after the events. And from such a bird's eye vantage point Isocrates' pleas for Greek unity against the Barbarians take on overwhelming proportions. His words are brilliantly illumined by the afterglow of Alexander's deeds. His writings are our only written record of a movement in Greece which culminated in the overthrow of the Persian empire and the Hellenization of the East. The work of Isocrates was not bypassed by History to remain only dead words for erudite men to read but found a stunning and ever-lasting realization in a new epoch for the human spirit.

As attractive as this interpretation may be, it presents

certain difficulties which must be considered. In the first place, it presupposes a complete alienation from Isocrates considered in himself. Isocrates is surely not equal to Alexander; there are evident differences between what Isocrates proposed and what Alexander did. To study or read Isocrates in terms of what happened afterwards is to reject Isocrates' thought a priori; it is to see the events which occurred under the Macedonian hegemony as all correct, good, or inevitable and Isocrates as only interesting to the extent which he may have helped to bring about those events. In other words, such an approach to Isocrates implies the suspension of the critical attitude appropriate to the scholar. The relations between historical events are always complex and to interpret all in regard to that one which seems the most important is a dangerous temptation. The only way Isocrates' relation to Philip or Alexander, or his role in creating the national psychology that paved the way for them, can be interpreted is to understand that role in its entirety while temporarily adjourning reflection on events about which he could have no knowledge. Then, a real confrontation of the thoughts of Isocrates and the historical events could take place.

The second major difficulty with the Isocrates-Alexander interpretation concerns the complexity of Isocrates' works. Speaking generally, there are three perspectives from which Isocrates can be interpreted--as moralist, as rhetorician, and as propagandist for pan-Hellenism. All three of these aspects have had their currency with the latter being pretty exclusively confined to modern times. From Cicero through the Church Fathers up to Rousseau the major interest in Isocrates stemmed either from the way he wrote

speeches or from what he had to say about the way men should or do act. If his pan-Hellenism was noticed, it seems to have been regarded as simply a preoccupation which was conditioned by particular historical events which were no longer of interest but which served as vehicles for utterances of a more lasting value. But since we have come to believe in the unity and direction of the historical process, more interest has been taken in the events of the past as marking epochs in the realization of the nature of humankind and with this new interest has developed whatever attention has been paid to Isocrates as a figure who helped bring about these changes.

Now it is evident that any one of these three approaches taken apart would pervert the understanding of Isocrates. His moral maxims take their life from the situations to which he addresses himself and they are likely to differ when he talks of war against the Barbarians to Philip and when he speaks of the ancient order to the Athenians. Each situation calls for a different maxim and the situation is the key to the maxims. Thus a collection of Isocrates' maxims would be uninteresting in itself. And if Isocrates the rhetorician is to be interpreted, it cannot be done without a consideration of the sort of topics a rhetorician should develop nor of his reflections on the function of rhetoric as revealed through its use. And, finally, Isocrates, the man who recruited the army against the Barbarians can only be properly seen when we know his art of rhetoric and his judgments about the right courses of human conduct.

It is therefore with the greatest caution that one must proceed to the interpretation of the Isocratic pan-Hellenism. But, for all of this, modern interpretation has grasped something very important in its concentration on his theme. It is here that somehow

rhetoric and action meet for Isocrates; it is on this that he constantly vaunts himself and stakes his claim to renown. His speeches about it are the most polished and it is evident that they are made to have this attractive effect. We are interested in panhellenism because Isocrates wanted us to be. But why?

Isocrates makes no pretention that he comes forward with a new idea when he urges the Greeks to cease their internecine warfare, to unite, and to make war against the Barbarians. All to the contrary, he indicates that it is an idea which has already been discussed to the point of boredom.¹ We know that Gorgias, Xenophon, Plato, and Aristotle, not to mention all the unknown sophists and statesmen, were interested in the theme. It is one so obvious that it could hardly be overlooked by any one. Here were the Greeks, the most vigorous and civilized nation that ever existed, wasting themselves away in a series of brutal and meaningless wars while in face of them was a corrupt and primitive empire which was naturally hostile to the Greeks, was the sole party to profit from Greek squabbles, and the conquest of which would have fulfilled the personal and territorial ambitions of the hostile parties within Greece. No sensible man who was not gainfully involved in the petty party strife in the Greek cities could fail to look beyond these momentary interests to a solution which simply bypassed these fruitless struggles. The politics within the cities had been degraded by their narrow

¹ Panegyricus 15.

the war against the Barbarians in itself nor intrigued by a great Greek empire but used these attractive objects as lures to the less exciting but more fundamental problem of healthy Greek political life.

Now it is of the utmost importance to establish solidly what Isocrates meant by this Greek union and to distinguish it clearly from the one founded by Philip's might. There are several sorts of national solutions possible. One can create a single centralized state as was done in Italy; there can be a confederation of sovereign states; or there can be simply peaceful cooperation between cities for limited ends as was the intention of the United Nations. One of the main errors of the book of George Mathieu⁵ is that he did not see how important the difference between these possible solutions was for Isocrates. Mathieu seems to believe that Isocrates wanted the campaign at all costs and that he devoted his life to realizing a Greek union without caring if it was Athenian hegemony or Macedonian mastery. Mathieu believed that the Great pan-Hellenic war is the fixed point in Isocrates' life work and that the various alternatives he proposes depend upon particular historical conditions that made one approach more or less feasible at a given moment. This view forgets just how important the polis, the polis as elaborated in our first chapter, is to Isocrates. The small independent polis is the political unit which realizes man's fullest capacities. It is cut to human size. If it were much smaller it would be condemned to a rude primitiveness; and if it were much larger the citizen would be lost in a mass of men and become anonymous. In the

⁵George Mathieu, Les Idées Politiques d'Isocrate (Paris: Budé, 1925).

preoccupations with one another's aggrandizements and a class of statesman had grown up which matched the level of the political goals.²

In these circumstances it befitted intelligent men to take a certain critical distance from their own cities and attempt to turn their attention to solving this crisis.³ It was practically impossible for serious men to identify themselves with national interests that had fallen so low. The almost universal suggestion was some sort of Greek union for the purpose of making war against the Barbarians. And it is within this framework that Isocrates' pan-Hellenic works take place. He devoted himself to the elaboration of a solution to the most pressing Greek problems. It is to be remarked that his attention was always more drawn to the question of the Greek union and its facilitation than to that of the war itself. The great bulk of the speeches are filled with discussions of the appropriate leaders and means for the unification, and the Barbarians are rather left in the background. They are used as pretexts and incitements for the union and there is little real discussion of ways and means to be used against them. Isocrates always insists that the first step is to make the Greeks stop their wars and make common cause.⁴ He charges that all the others who had developed the theme had talked only about the desirability of a campaign against the Great King and everybody was agreed about that. The primary issue is to prepare the Greeks for such a campaign. One is led to suspect sometimes that Isocrates was not particularly interested in

² Panegyricus 133-137.

³ Ibid. 171.

⁴ Ibid. 16.

great cities and nations men live like animals in herds; individuals have no chance to express themselves or be known to others by the exercise of citizen's functions. The laws act at long distance and are rather preventive measures than institutions for the careful education of each discrete element of the body politic. The great masses of men live anarchically under tyrants. The polis, in the strictest sense of the term, was throughout his entire life the political standard for Isocrates. One cannot say that his opinions about this question changed with the shifting political winds of Greece. It is true that he spoke about this question more or less forcefully in different speeches but this variation can be easily explained by the demands of the subject at hand in each instance. Even in the Panegyricus the ancestral politeia is described as the cause of the patriotism of the men of Marathon and Salamis. The essentials of Isocrates' political preference for the polis are to be found in every speech he made and one might even venture to say that it is the only element of his thought which never seems to change. There was no human object that seemed so dignified to him as a noble citizenry governing itself justly while maintaining its liberty and providing sufficiently for the needs of body and soul. Any national solution to the Greek problem would have been to discard the good with the bad, for it would have implied changing the basic structure of civic life. One can safely found himself on the conviction that Isocrates always regarded something like the ancestral politeia of Athens, as he described it, the best possible political solution.

It thus seems rather curious that Isocrates spent so much of

his time and his talent on his discussion of the pan-Hellenic union. It would seem that at best it is somewhat peripheral to his great interest in the polis. One would have expected that he would have passed his life in developing more fully the issues stated in the Areopagiticus rather than seemingly to set them aside in favor of ventures in an area that rendered precarious the very existence of that old order. It is in the resolution of this apparent contradiction that the true character of Isocrates' thought becomes clear. And one loses his way if he tries to ignore the question as does Mathieu by saying, for example, that a speech like the Peace, or the Areopagiticus, is made for the purpose of tightening up Athens' internal slack in preparation for the great war. In addition to the fact that there is not the slightest textual basis for this assertion, it ignores the great difference between these speeches and those on pan-Hellenism, a difference which Isocrates underlines by the very title of the Peace and his support of the Great King's treaty in it.⁶ There is a tension which exists between these two categories of speeches and it is simple justice to the text to attempt to see how Isocrates handles it and what he means by it before we assume that Isocrates was either ignorant of it or attempt to explain it away by assigning dates to the speeches that would give Isocrates enough time to change his mind.⁷ There are two major

⁶Peace 16, cf. Panegyricus 175-178, 120-121. The fact is that the Peace covers the same ground as the pan-Hellenic speeches but in an entirely different manner. Instead of a war against the Barbarians, Isocrates suggests that the Athenians take land in Thrace for their excess population, thus removing the prime need for the war. Peace 24.

⁷Mathieu assumed that pan-Hellenism was the single major idea expressed in Isocrates' writing career; he therefore was forced to interpret speeches which do not have a pan-Hellenic character as

political themes in the orations--the polis and the pan-Hellenism--and we must try to see how Isocrates related them.

momentary changes of emphasis. He was thus led to interpret the Busiris as a purely literary work and paid no attention to it because it is supposed to be a very early piece, written before the pan-Hellenic epoch. In the Busiris, however, is stated in its clearest fashion the Isocratic doctrine of the best political order and it is also stated that the Spartans are the best governed of the Greeks. The Areopagiticus only picks up this theme in a slightly watered down form; and at the end of the life of Isocrates the problem is treated again in the Panathenaicus in much the same way. In none of these speeches is pan-Hellenism the subject. Hence it is false to say that it was momentary change in Isocrates' view of the Greek political situation that caused him to write the Peace and the Areopagiticus. This represents a constant and recurring theme that is not in and of itself pan-Hellenic. Mathieu's presupposition that the Panegyricus is the key to all Isocrates' writing caused him to miss the importance of this divergence of themes. The Panegyricus is rather the exception than the rule, and its divergence from the general doctrine of the nature of the polis poses a most important problem that is hidden by an all explanatory system of dating the speeches. A subsidiary problem that was hidden in the same way was that of Isocrates' preferences for Sparta, which are so carefully presented by him.

Mathieu says that Isocrates' support of the King's Peace in the Plataicus, another non-pan-Hellenic speech, was due to the supremacy of the Thebans at the time in which he supposes the speech was written. But that does not explain why Isocrates supports it again in the Peace which he supposes was written at a time when Thebes was no longer so powerful. Mathieu must also assume that he knows what Isocrates' personal feelings were in order to explain these changes in content. Whereas if one looks simply to the internal content of the speeches one finds a perfectly adequate explanation of the problem: any pan-Hellenic war implies the rupture of the kings treaty, whereas devotion to sane internal politics demands peace and order in Hellas. These are two different lines of thought that Isocrates seems to have held constantly and contemporaneously; one must then attempt to comprehend how he was able to hold these two contradictory positions. One cannot say that he so often changed his mind. The answer was that he was talking about different things and different things not simply caused by accidental changes.

It is the same with the problem of tyranny. It seems unreasonable to suppose that Isocrates changed his mind about the value of tyranny so many times, praising it in the Busiris, criticizing it in the Panegyricus, supporting it in the letter to Dionysius, returning again to Athens with the Peace, changing again to solicit Philip, and finally returning to Athens with the Panathenaicus. The simple historical changes are not a sufficient explanation; the fact that Isocrates wrote to Dionysius in 368 does not imply that Athens was less prepared to lead a campaign at that moment than in either 380 or 355, at both of which dates, according to the

Isocrates always treats of the ancestral politeia as a creature of the ancient past--sometimes even beyond the grasp of historical recollection. The great political orders were almost all created when Greece was young and manners were yet simple.⁸ They depended on the act of creation of a great man--a Theseus or a Lycurgus--who set immovable patterns for their fellow-citizens. In the foundations of the cities there were large elements of mere chance--there had to be adequate land and skill to feed the people, there had to be a people with sufficient potential capacity for political liberty, and, most improbable conjuncture of all, there had to be a lawgiver who had the understanding, force, and courage to silence greed and envy while establishing a just order. Any extreme

witness of Isocrates himself, Athens' affairs were not at all satisfactory. Nor was 346, the date of the Philip, a worse date for writing a speech like the Panathenaicus than 342. All of these differences in the speeches presuppose a comprehensive doctrine about the nature of tyranny which is to be found there. The difference between the Philip and the Peace is no more reasonably explained by their dates than is the difference between the Athenian Constitution and the Politics of Aristotle on the basis of their dates. They have different purposes. To explain them otherwise would cause us to assume that Isocrates had personal motivations of which he gave us no indication. Certain differences in detail can of course be interpreted on the basis of the dates which Isocrates gives us, but there is no reason to assume that his basic thought ever changed since he never indicates that it did. If he writes to a tyrant, there must be a place in his thought for tyranny and it is that which we must understand. Every speech must have a date, but the cause of that speech is not the date, at least in the case of Isocrates whose themes have a constancy of recurrence.

Finally, the dating of the orations is very difficult even on the basis of the events Isocrates gives us. And since he never gave his speeches, since they are fictions, those internal dates may also be literary fictions--historical reconstructions of themes which he wanted to present many years later. Hence an interpretation which depends entirely on dates is forced to make a very great number of ad hoc assumptions.

⁸ Panathenaicus 119-129; 153; Panegyricus 26-40; Antidosis 82; cf. Busiris 11-29.

scarcity would legitimate an unjust order, an appropriation by the strongest of the simple means of self-preservation with no eye to the best order of things. In other words, the foundation of a just politeia requires a certain material and moral plenty which, considering the ordinary scarcity of the human situation, is not to be found everywhere. Thus a good regime is not the natural right of every society, but the result of the good fortune and hard labor of rare societies. Since just political order is a treasure not often won, it is something that must be protected from others because the mixture of good and bad politeiai produces at the very best mediocre politeiai. The good regime is above the ordinary level of human things and so must be protected from it; the ugly word xenophobia finds its justification in civil society.⁹ Of course a humane city will attempt to share its good fortune with others as did Athens when her order was established. She taught agriculture to the other Greek cities; she gave them a model for their laws; and, in a prefiguration of the suggestions of Isocrates, she led the superfluous population of the cities into the vastness of Asia, there to cut out sufficient lands for themselves. All these things generous men will do; but they cannot break the fine balance of their own regime for the good of others; that would be to injure themselves without helping the others. The most important element of any civic constitution is the *ὁμόνοια* --singleness of purpose--of all the citizens.¹⁰ All must agree on the common good and devote themselves to it; private interest must be swallowed up in the identification

⁹Peace 49-50, cf. Panathenaicus 176ff.

¹⁰Peace 19, Areopagiticus 31, Panathenaicus 178.

with the whole. This requires a suppression of overriding class issues and an agreement on the fundamentals of justice which is the fruit of generations. It requires an uncommon virtue and moderation. And it requires the homogeneity of the population.

All of this is evidently established on the most tenuous of bases and the possible sources of change are innumerable. If the rich become too rich and oppress the poor the harmony between the classes can be destroyed. The same result can come about if the crops should fail over a long period of time. Or there can be subtle changes in moral standards which become obvious only too late, such as when the honors of public office become more important than the service, and personal ambition begins to play too grand a role. But a healthy politeia based upon a moderate upper class can weather many such storms because of its intrinsic virtues.¹¹ However the ancestral politeia did fall in spite of its strengths, and Isocrates sees the source of the destruction in matters of what we would today call foreign policy. All went well with Athens until the day when she recognized that Sparta was a threat to her independence.¹² Greece had grown great and densely populated and there was a struggle for existence. Now Sparta had become powerful and it was necessary to adjust the Athenian policy to that of Lacedaemon or risk the loss of her own resources. Virtue must sometimes wear the clothing of vice in order to defend herself.¹³ Athens was forced to cease from her activities of good will and render herself

¹¹Panathenaicus 148.

¹²Ibid. 166.

¹³Ibid. 114.

militarily strong, and this was the first step in a long series which destroyed the old way of life.

Then came the crucial moment--the invasions of the Great King. Athens reached the pinnacle of her glory in nobly defending the Greeks. But in the very act she created an internal revolution. At Salamis the Athenians turned from the use of her traditional land army to that of a fleet. This choice was necessitated by the event. The decision of Themistocles to embark on the boats and leave the land was unquestionably a brilliant tactical move and was the central cause of the Greek victory. But in so doing, the Athenians overturned the balance of power in their own city. Previously the wars had all been fought on land using the citizen troops who had the wherewithal to provide themselves with a suit of armor. This meant that only a rather limited segment of the population could become soldiers--those with money and enough discipline and courage to face hand to hand combat. Land armies were the preserve of the middle class and when wars only used such troops the regime could be safely founded on such a moderate base--they held the real power and could make the moral claim that it was on them that the fatherland depended. Now the change in means of defense removed the supports from the regime. The need was for sailors, for men who could row boats. The questions of education, money, or even virtue, no longer entered the picture. The qualifications for the profession of sailor were much lower than those for that of soldier. The main issue was to get as many men rowing the boat as quickly as possible. The type of men most willing to do this and most easy to find were from the poor and even foreigners. It seems that the moral reputation of

seafaring men has been the same in all ages. In the same moment that such men became the bastion of the national power the influence of the old ruling classes vanished.¹⁴

Athens knew now a great influence and her integrity required the maintenance of her new found force. It was a choice between accepting Lacedaemonian domination or dominating herself. Thus the marine character of Athens' establishment became institutionalized and it was not long before the poor became conscious of their strength and the need Athens had of them.

Men like Pericles established their power on them by making them citizens and offering them advantages at the expense of the well to do in return for their positions. The rest of the history is well known. Athens became the center of a type of abandoned licence unknown in Greece up to its day. Although it was the home of all the arts and sciences, it was also the center of luxury and poverty, ambition and lawlessness. The sort of men who had been by necessity co-opted into the politeia required money and to procure money there had to be a "tyrant" empire. After the personal leadership of Pericles, he could have the confidence of the people who would offer the most in the way of hopes. Wars were incessant and Athens forgot the ancient class which had formerly been the substance of the city.

This is the sad history of Athens as seen by Isocrates. It is well to note the source of the changes. A new step in strategy was at the root of the trouble and from that step flowed all the

¹⁴Panathenaicus 114-119; Peace 75-79; 48; 44; 63-64. In the Peace Marathon is praised rather than Salamis.

unhappy conclusions that made Athens and all of Greece so miserable.¹⁵ No matter how well seated the old style of government had been, the means by which it maintained itself became dated during the Persian wars and sooner or later such a change in real power must reflect itself in the institutions of a city. The pressures of external events are one of the main causes of the great revolutions in men's way of living. In our own day this point need not be stressed, so much do the events give witness to it. No nation could maintain itself without industrialization and all of the institutions that are corollary to it. Nor could one be ignorant of the fact that the existence of the atomic bomb as means of defense implies a type of society which can invent and produce it; and, woe to the nation which refuses to adjust itself to such needs. No matter how isolated a nation may be, there is always the strong possibility that some enemy will come to the attack using techniques that are unknown to it. If the society is to defend itself, it must change its ways to the extent that it can meet the challenge. Sometimes it loses in its defense that which it set out to defend.

In the fifth and fourth century the size and power of the Greek cities were such that they were all under one another's influence and could not avoid the type of defensive adjustment of which we have been speaking. Aristotle says in the Politics that in his day democracy seemed the only feasible sort of regime.¹⁶ Isocrates was not so blind as not to see that different situations gave birth to different types of regimes. His political ideas in this regard

¹⁵Peace 122-33; 12-13; 88.

¹⁶Politics 1286b20-22.

had considerable flexibility. Sometimes oligarchy is necessary,¹⁷ sometimes democracy, sometimes even tyranny.¹⁸ It would have been impossible to set up an oligarchical regime at Athens without the brutality of the Thirty and its possibilities for success were very slight.¹⁹ There were too many poor and the city's livelihood was so based on their activities that it would have meant a tyrannical pressure would have had to have been constantly applied to them. In the former times the city was not so large, agriculture, as opposed to manufacture, was the basis of its prosperity. Thus no great injustice was done to the population when the government was based on the middle class.²⁰ But all this was different in the time of Isocrates and it must be borne in mind that when he spoke to the Athenians he was speaking to the very people who were responsible for the change and who would be disfranchised in the case of the establishment of a new politeia. And, further, he spoke with full consciousness that the type of situation in the fourth century demanded the sort of organization which existed. That is why the Areopagiticus and the Peace appear to be rather analyses than real projects.

The Isocratic response to the new situation that made his best political order impossible is the pan-Hellenism. He did not react as many moderns would have done; he did not see a destiny which was leading men on to a new order of things which had not been conceived in the past. He did not put his faith in the historical

¹⁷ Peace 117.

¹⁸ Philip 107.

¹⁹ Areopagiticus 62-69.

²⁰ Areopagiticus 44-45.

process. He taught that human nature does not change and that the best political order conforming to that nature remains always the same. When a city is necessarily born to change itself that does not make the change good. Perhaps Greece's state was necessary but that does not imply that new type of order based on the possibilities existing can be made as desirable as the old, outmoded way. Just as primitivism is a defective but often necessary stage, so is bigness and over-civilization defective. The only hope is to find on the level of the defective stage some path which can lead back toward the healthy order of the past. Simply to suggest that the old order was good is not enough; there must also be the means to create its conditions.

Now, leaving aside all the variations in expression, addressee, and rhetorical trapping, a careful reading of the pan-Hellenic speeches will show that their goal was always such a rehabilitation of the good old times. The idea was to unite the Greeks around an issue that would require a common action and a cessation of the petty hostilities.²¹ This required a goal which offered enough real gain to attract the imagination and energies of the Greeks. Such a pretext could be found in the great traditional enemies of the Greeks, the Barbarians, who waxed so fat with land and gold.²² Such a campaign would draw a large group of those who had little to keep them at home into the armies in the hopes of

²¹Philip 9-10; Panathenaicus 13; Panegyricus 15. In his descriptions of the ancient activities of Athens, Isocrates states most clearly of all the purposes of his pan-Hellenism and its dispositions for the poor, cf. esp. Panathenaicus 164-166.

²²Panegyricus 173-174; 179-186.

gain thus emptying the cities of their most irresponsible citizen element. And the same function would be served in the establishing of colonies on the lands that were to be won. The mercenary armies that roamed Greece at the service of the highest bidder would also be swallowed in the great cause.²³ Hence the Greek cities would find their enervated spirits re-kindled and the moderate classes could regain the elements of their influence. It is a new Trojan war, a new beginning for Greece. This is the hard core of the plan in the service of which Isocrates uses so many eloquent wiles. Contained therein there is absolutely no plea for a Greek national state, none for the spreading of Greek culture to the East.

B

Now one must look very carefully at the particular way in which Isocrates goes about persuading the Greeks that they must follow his course of action. The Panegyricus is his best known and most widely read speech, and rightly so because he vaunts it as the best demonstration of his powers of persuasion and constantly refers to it as his chef d'oeuvre. In it Isocrates pictures himself as coming before a great assembly of the Greeks, an assembly where all the Greeks temporarily have abandoned their strife and in a spirit of good will have come to watch displays of skill by the most able men in the most interesting arts. These assemblies do not, however, give prizes to the wise; but, in spite of this vital oversight, Isocrates is going to forge a prize for himself out of the gratitude that all will have for the genius of his proposals. Furthermore, he draws special attention to the beauty of his rhetoric, the tools of his persuasion. This is going to be both a speech of counsels

²³Letter ix. 9-10; Panegyricus 167-168; Philip 96; 120-121.

and display (*ἐπίδειξις*). Now it is obvious why he has chosen this discourse to be his most rhetorically developed work. It is the possible project; it is the realizable idea and the adherence of men can be won by persuasive words.

According to this aim one finds an enormous difference in the treatment of the material between a speech like the Panegyricus and one like the Peace. One feels it in the very difference of atmosphere between the speeches--the cold, reproving pessimism which pervades the Peace as opposed to the warm, positive hopefulness of the Panegyricus. And commensurate with this difference is the difference in audience--the one, the happy festival; the other, the solemn moment of public deliberation in time of national crisis. In both instances Isocrates is evidently addressing himself essentially to the Athenian citizen-body, but viewed in each instance under a different light.

And the treatment of the same issues varies accordingly to the changed character of these metamorphosed bodies of Athenians. The most striking and far-reaching of these shifting nuances is that of the moral standard Isocrates employs. The most careless reader of the Panegyricus will receive the impression that all is well with Athens, that her ill fortune was due to chance and the cunning of the evil. Isocrates proceeds by a method of story telling, omission, and turning black into white; he accepts the notion that a leader of nations must appear to be just and therefore develops an "ideological" picture of Athens' justice. An uncritical judgment would class the Panegyricus among the works which prove the glory and grandeur of the Athenians of which we have heard so much in the

last one hundred years. In the Peace, all to the contrary, he makes a critical and realistic analysis of Athens' actions in the past; he does not accept the Athenian conception of her own rights as the necessary standard but uses as measure an orthodox code of morality. He insists that Athens and the passions of her citizens have been the causes of the Athenian troubles.

For example, the Peace is postulated on the assumption that the morality of the Melian dialogue has become that of Athens as a whole.²⁴ Unbounded desires for the things of others are the bases of the conduct of most men. *πλεονεξία*, stealing the march on one's neighbor, seems the most profitable way to live. The ideas of Thrasymachus, the view that justice is noble but that nobility is unprofitable and has no place in the order of things, lead to certitude that *πλεονεξία* is the only way to live. This notion found its embodiment in the Athenian empire.²⁵ It is the morality of tyrants and its democratic equivalent is an empire based on seapower. Isocrates attempts, in the Peace, to re-interpret the notion of and to prove that the only real *πλεονεξία* is to be found in justice (*δικαιοσύνη*).²⁶ In the Panegyricus, all to the contrary, *πλεονεξία* in its ordinary sense is accepted as a legitimate aim.²⁷ Isocrates simply suggests that it is rather unprofitable to attempt to satisfy these insatiable passions in Greece where the powers are balanced so well that the result of immoderate desire is mutual destruction; hence, the best solution is to make use of the limitless

²⁴Peace 28-33.

²⁵Ibid. 91ff.

²⁶Ibid. 33-35.

²⁷Panegyricus 17.

riches of the Barbarians for whom the Greeks have an ancestral hatred. Isocrates lowers his standard by taking at face value a common way of life which he personally rejects and trying to make the most of the situation which exists rather than trying to change fundamentally that situation. He will make his policies of such a nature as would lead to a result favorable to his own preferences but he will not insist that the individuals who enact these policies be rightly motivated. If the Greeks will cease their wars for the sake of gain or glory it is better than insisting that they do it for the sake of the just which is not motivating for them.

Isocrates states the problem in his introduction to the

Peace:

I see that you do not hear with equal favor the speakers who address you, but that, while you give your attention to some, in the case of others you do not even suffer their voice to be heard. And it is not surprising that you do this; for in the past you have formed the habit of driving all the orators from the platform except those who support your desires. Wherefore one may justly take you to task because, while you know well that many great houses have been ruined by flatterers and while in private affairs you abhor those who practice this art, in your public affairs you are not so minded towards them; on the contrary, while you denounce those who welcome and enjoy the society of such men, you yourselves place greater confidence in them than in the rest of your fellow-citizens.

Indeed, you have caused the orators to practice and study, not what will be advantageous to the city, but how they will talk in a pleasing manner to you. And it is to this kind of discourse that the majority of them have resorted also at the present time, since it has become plain to all that you will be better pleased with those who summon you to war than those who counsel peace; for the former put into our minds the expectation both of regaining our possessions in the several cities and of recovering the power which we formerly enjoyed, while the latter hold forth no such hope, insisting rather that we must keep quiet and not crave great possessions contrary to justice, but be content with those we have--and that for the great majority of mankind is of all things the most difficult. For we are so dependant on our hopes and so insatiate in seizing what seems to be our advantage that not even those who possess the greatest fortunes are willing to

rest satisfied with them but are always grasping after more and so risking the loss of what they have.²⁸

He finds a war, that which the Athenians want; this war will lead to peace, that which Isocrates and wisdom counsel.

The Panegyricus begins with the assertion that the question which divides the Greeks is fundamentally that of politeia--the difference in type of regime between Athens and Sparta.²⁹ Before any common action could be undertaken this difference would have to be resolved. No plans for an attack on the Barbarians would be of any use unless the Greeks were of one mind. The explicit aim of the Panegyricus is therefore to settle definitively the question of Greek internecine differences. As response, Isocrates takes unreservedly the side of Athens; the solution proposed is that Sparta and all the others incline themselves before the claims of Athens. He insists that Athens has the right to be the leader and that her politeia is the just one. He enters into the ancient history of Athens, a history that might well be considered mythical especially when one knows Isocrates' own reserves about myths.³⁰ This history is most interesting in several regards.

In the first place he praises the Athenian politeia as it was in the old days--its justice and beneficence. But he never once mentions the fact which so preoccupied all his other work on Athens--that this politeia had been irreparably corrupted and changed. He treats the history of Athens as a continuity with no breaks in its development. The fathers of the men who fought at Marathon and

²⁸ Panegyricus 17.

²⁹ Ibid. 15.

³⁰ Evagoras 7; Philip 142-43; Panegyricus 168.

who trained them for virtue are in nowise distinguished from the men who will fight the great new war.³¹ The power on the sea which was the root of Athenian deterioration becomes in the Panegyricus the just claim for the hegemony.³² According to Isocrates in the Peace, the Athenians had lost every trace of military virtue and he even ridicules the descent from the boats of the pretended rulers of the world carrying their cushions under their arms. But it is this group which he chooses as the military leaders of the Greeks.

In the same measure, in the Panegyricus Isocrates presents himself as a convinced democrat. He states the common view of democratic parties, that citizen birth is the sole standard for the exercise of citizen rights; and any regime which does not recognize this position is against nature,³³ whereas, in the Peace and the Areopagiticus, the key to citizenship is virtue and property. If the regime which Isocrates outlines in them is a democracy, certainly a debatable point, it is not the pure and simple rule of the many. But here Isocrates identifies himself completely with the accepted opinion and entirely withdraws his critical faculty.³⁴

³¹Panegyricus 75ff.

³²Ibid. 21. Isocrates makes the same play on the word in both the Peace and the Panegyricus. The difference in sense which he gives the phrase is most revealing. In the Peace the on the sea was the ῥοπή of the ills of the Spartans and Athenians; while in the Panegyricus the Athenian loss of ῥοπή was the ῥοπή of the ills of Greece. (Peace 101, 105; Panegyricus 119).

³³Panegyricus 104-105.

³⁴None of the differences of opinion which exist between the Peace and the Panegyricus can be explained on the basis of their dates. The speeches before and after the Panegyricus maintain roughly the same positions on these questions as the Peace.

The Athenian hegemony over the Greeks is presented in the most flattering possible colors. Isocrates seemingly forgets his own teaching about justice and insists that since one hegemony or another was necessary, the Athenian was more desirable than the Lacedaemonian.³⁵ A principle that has all the flavor of Realpolitik. He says that the Athenians ruled for the good of the ruled and established democracies, showing thereby the Athenian generosity. In the Peace, Athenian rule is said to have been based solely on the passion for tyranny; and the Athenians turned Greece upside down, destroyed politeiai, and established democracies only to control the cities thus changed. And the most astonishing omission of all, Isocrates never once mentions the Peloponnesian war. Neither the causes of that war nor the hatred against the Athenians, nor the Athenian aspirations to become masters of the world up to Carthage are even hinted at.³⁷ The history of Athens' empire thus appears with a certain charming naiveté that would conform to the "and they lived happily ever after" ending of a fairy tale. All that could spoil the perfection of Athens' good deeds is carefully excised in the account of Isocrates. The speech is a justification of Athens for Athenians; and as Socrates said, "It is easy to praise Athens to Athenians."³⁸ The non-critical listener, the patriot, the man who likes to be praised, are not likely to raise any objections to an

³⁵Panegyricus 100ff.

³⁶Ibid. 104-105.

³⁷Peace 37; 79; 82-89; Panathenaicus 156.

³⁸Plato, Menexenus 235 D.

account of their city's deeds which is so flattering even though the speaker removes himself from the strictest standards of the truth. Anybody who has listened to the speeches at a political convention can understand the type of rhetoric Isocrates uses in the Panegyricus; and, similarly, anybody who has ever been a partisan can comprehend the psychology on which the orator counted. But we are not partisans and we cannot escape seeing in all its clarity the double role which Isocrates consciously (for we must admit it was conscious if we are not to assume that Isocrates was almost unbelievably inconsistent, since the differences are so great and follow such a definite pattern) takes on--that of a completely loyal citizen as represented in the Panegyricus, and that of the critical thinker on political affairs in the Peace.

The introductory passages of the Panegyricus concerning the benefits that Athens had rendered the Greeks are also rich with assertions which are either contradicted or elaborated by the Peace. For example he says that the Mysteries provide "περὶ τοῦ συμπάντος ἀνθρώπου ἡ δούσας τὰς ἐλπίδας". In the Peace the same expression is used for those who live with justice and piety.³⁹ The mysteries were an affair open to all Athenians and took no more, and perhaps less, effort than the simple membership in any organized religious group. Thus Isocrates demands nothing not readily available in Athens in exchange for great hopes with respect to eternity. In the Peace, Isocrates demands something, and something in which Athens was sadly lacking--justice and piety. The whole Panegyricus follows the same theme, nothing that is unpleasant or disturbing is ever said.

³⁹ Panegyricus 28; Peace 34.

Similarly what he has to say about Athens' autochthony, that great blessing which permitted Athens to possess her land without committing the injustice of driving others out, is supplemented by the statement that the whole ancient race had been virtually exterminated and new citizens whose histories were indeed dubious had been introduced.⁴⁰ And, finally, the free and easy Athenian life and her love of philosophy which Isocrates lauds changes its visage when one considers what he says elsewhere about the anarchy of Athenian living, states the necessity for more moderate tastes and speaks of how Athens treats her philosophers, in particular himself.⁴¹

This re-evaluation of moral standards is evident to an even more outstanding degree in the Philip and this speech, lightly read, could take its place among the works of the most shameless tyrant flatterers. The purpose of the Philip is allegedly exactly the same as that of the Panegyricus. Isocrates appeals to Philip as a natural leader of Greece and urges him to unite the Greeks in favor of a campaign against the Barbarians. Philip is such a natural choice for the role, according to Isocrates, because he is rich and powerful and a monarch who is naturally outside of the artificial constraints provided by the laws and customs of individual cities. Such a man can act freely, sending and receiving ambassadors to and from wherever he likes, using his powers of intimidation and persuasion whenever he sees fit, deciding all things on the basis of his own judgment as can be done only in the monarchic form of government.⁴² In

⁴⁰ Panegyricus 24-25; Peace 49-50; 88-89.

⁴¹ Panegyricus 43-50; Areopagiticus 29-30; 52-54; Antidosis 171-172; 303-304.

⁴² Philip 14-16; 127.

a word, Philip represents all that was seen to be lacking in the Panegyricus--a practical means for the realization of the pan-Hellenic projects.⁴³ There can be no doubt that the Philip is the contre-partie of the Panegyricus insofar that all the toughness that lacks in the one is to be found in the other. This, however, does not justify the conclusion that this difference is to be explained by the fact that the Philip was written after a long series of frustrations and a resultant hardening of his sensibilities. The very obvious idea that such a revolution in Greek affairs required, almost as a principle, the salutary action of an enlightened tyrant occurs very early in Isocrates' thought as can be seen from the letter to Dionysius, the date of which can not be too far removed from that of the Panegyricus.⁴⁴ The letter to Dionysius contains in germ all that the Philip says in developed fashion. The farther we have gone in the course of this exposition of Isocrates' thought, the more evident it has become that he was not entirely so ingenuous as he sometimes may have wished to appear and the need for force in the realization of political plans was not one of which he was ignorant. One might then ask why Isocrates wrote the Panegyricus with its evident disregard for real political practice if he was not one of the generous idealists who disseminates humanitarian theories which are later reformed in the forge of everyday power politics? And such a question would indeed be an important one and its answer

⁴³Philip 12-14.

⁴⁴Without entering into detail concerning the vexed question of dates, since Dionysius died in 367, there can be at the worst only thirteen years between the Panegyricus, which was at the earliest written in 380, and the letter to him. This letter was written at least twenty years before the Philip.

would resolve many paradoxes. I hope to make an attempt to respond to the question but only after an analysis of the Philip which will clarify the nature of the pan-Hellenism.

Isocrates commences the speech with a seemingly irrelevant piece on the then recently concluded war between Athens and Philip over Amphipolis. The irrelevance fades when one observes that throughout the speech one of Isocrates' primary goals is to persuade Philip to take seriously an Athenian orator, i.e. a pretty talker with no sense of realities. He recounts how his companions ridiculed the idea of his sending an oration to Philip; these friends have a reaction similar to that which Philip will presumably have: another busybody is trying to attach himself to my coattails, I who am the most powerful man in the world surrounded by able advisers broken to the conduct of affairs. By telling of the incident and the subsequent change of opinion on the part of his disciples he expects to change this natural disposition. But what hope that Philip, a busy man, will get that far with the speech. This is not the panegyric audience gathered for the express purpose of listening to a display of rhetorical skill with a taste for that type of amusement, and practiced in the nuances of the game. This is Philip, a serious man of affairs. So Isocrates attaches a little discourse at the beginning designed to attract the attention of Philip, demonstrating that he too understands what Philip's interests were. This passage states the issues in the purest balance of power terms making absolutely no appeal to either justice or decency. It is simply stated that Philip would do well to let the Athenians keep Amphipolis because he would then have all the settlers

as effective hostages and thus be in possession of a real guaranty of Athenian good will; and the Athenians are encouraged to stay away from men like Philip and put their colonies where they will not fall under such influence.

Isocrates makes no attempt to reform or to change ordinary habits in this little introduction; the sole motives implied are gain and personal interest. Philip is to be shown in clearest fashion that Isocrates will speak in such terms and will not sermonize or harangue him. The conclusions that are drawn from such reasoning are perfectly respectable and such as to in nowise shock a decent reader, but the level of the reasonings is clear and gives us a good idea what Isocrates thinks of Philip and his motives of action. His method of arguing throughout the speech follows this pattern. The pan-Hellenic idea is stated in terms of personal advantage from beginning to end.

Stylistically it approaches the To Nicocles more closely than the Panegyricus. It is much barer, as Isocrates himself says, without the artifices that mark the Panegyricus. Philip needs to be convinced that this is not a work of display; this is a speech which could not appeal to a festival audience. Isocrates goes to a great deal of effort to point this out at several places in the speech in reassuring him that the truth is what counts while distinguishing himself from the ordinary rhetorician and Philip from the common mob.⁴⁵ All that is practically gainful has no need of the sweetening of Isocrates' art. And it is in this that the Philip

⁴⁵Philip 24-29; 81-82; 155.

differs from Isocrates' other orations of advice. The To Nicocles lays down decent maxims of morality which Nicocles must follow in order to be a good man; Isocrates makes no serious compromises with decent moral standards and acts as guide for Nicocles' conscience. Philip is treated as the man he is and Isocrates tells him how he can double his fortune; he is a sort of stock broker aiding his client whose avowed or implicit motive is avarice.⁴⁶ It is only secondary that the line of conduct suggested will aid Greece. Justice is rarely mentioned and never as a reason which could direct Philip's action, and piety hardly appears more; this is a really amazing fact for Isocrates who sometimes seems to speak of nothing else.

There are very few myths in the speeches compared with the Panegyricus. Those that occur have specific goals that have little to do with convincing Philip. For example, the antique history of Heracles' relations with Greece's four great cities has evidently as its purpose the justification of Philip's entry into Greek affairs.⁴⁷ Heracles was an ancestor of Philip and so Philip is simply carrying out an old family tradition when he attempts to take the leadership of the Greeks. Heracles was also unquestionably Greek; one might wonder about Philip the Macedonian.⁴⁸ Isocrates in giving him such a genealogy removes all such doubts; the reason why the family rules Macedonia is that they were men of the highest capacities--which means that they had a passion for tyranny. However they were too wise to attempt to usurp in Greek cities.⁴⁹ But this in no way prevents them from using their power so gained for

⁴⁶Philip 57; 115.

⁴⁷Ibid. 32-34.

⁴⁸Panegyricus 125-128.

⁴⁹Philip 106-108.

the benefit of the Greeks. Isocrates provides in this manner a banner behind which Philip can march. Philip will enter Greece with the support of ancestral right. This passage is designed to impress the Greeks more than Philip. And Isocrates brings the argument back to the level he has designed for Philip by remarking at the end of the passage: It is well to appear to do good for the greatest cities while benefiting yourself no less than they.⁵⁰ In the Philip nice stories do not suffice; their sharp point is always revealed.

Isocrates specifically refrains from complimenting Philip except on his great power. There is not a single remark which indicates that Philip ever did anything good in his entire life. He is valuable because he is powerful not because he is good. Philip's present state is due, according to Isocrates, to fortune.⁵¹ In his didactic speeches he frequently makes a distinction between success due to fortune and that resulting from virtue; the former is contemptible, the latter admirable.⁵² Courage seems to be the only virtue that Philip has or admires. Isocrates hence makes it a specific point to minimize the importance of courage in identifying it with the body; he shows that Heracles, who was courageous in the highest degree, was much more to be praised for the virtues of the soul and used his physical force in their service.⁵³ The gap between Heracles and Philip is thus marked clearly. And the distinction

⁵⁰Philip 36.

⁵¹Ibid. 15.

⁵²E.g., Panathenaicus 32; Demonicus 49; Busiris 10.

⁵³Philip 109ff.

between Philip's courage and mad rashness is blurred when one reads the first letter to Philip and sees the fashion in which his conduct is assimilated to that of Cyrus the Younger as described in Philip.

The explicit purpose of the speech is to turn Philip to "more fitting, nobler, and more beneficial deeds than those he used to choose." He subtly accuses Philip of having always been more interested in money and conquest than in aiding the Greeks. He states baldly that he had injured the Greek cities.⁵⁴ When Isocrates wishes to say something unpleasant he often softens the blow by putting it into the mouth of another, thus taking the responsibility off of himself. He tells Philip of all the vicious things that are said about him in Athens. He personally does not take it upon himself to defend Philip but counsels him to act in such a way as to prove the slanderers are lying.⁵⁵ There is an implication that Isocrates thinks that they might not be lying.

Isocrates brings four examples to Philip's attention.⁵⁶ They are all men who have accomplished striking things and the reason for citing them is to prove that great things can be done. These are not myths and they form a little rogues gallery all by themselves. Alcibiades who, for the sole interest of ending his own exile, turned his homeland upside down and betrayed the confidence of those who gave him refuge. Conon who dealt with the Barbarians to defeat the Lacedaemonians. Dionysius, a man of no merit who had a mad thirst for tyranny and achieved his ambition by brutality and

⁵⁴Philip 35. Isocrates presents his plans for benefiting the Hellenes as though Philip never could have thought of them himself. He never mentions an instance in which Philip has acted for the good of others as he does in the other speeches addressed to individuals.

⁵⁵Ibid. 73ff.

⁵⁶Ibid. 57-67.

treachery. And Cyrus, barbarian, son of a slave, exposed as an infant, who enslaved the Oriental world. Surely such a list would never be presented as example before a gentleman. This list is meant to make an impression in a way that stories would not; it is meant to incite to action and show the possible. The man in whom such a list would produce excitement rather than horror must be one who is no stranger to the type of conduct prescribed. Perhaps Isocrates even suggests that the type of action to be employed is similar. Isocrates tells us that Philip is the type of man who belongs in this list.

The Philip might have as subtitle On Power. The tantalizing potentialities of power and its immense dangers make up the attractions of this work. The foregoing exposé should make it evident that Isocrates cherished few illusions about Philip's character. This was another tyrant with a tyrant's motivations--the same sort of man as Dionysius of Syracuse.⁵⁷ Accident had however led this man to a position of overwhelming influence and this was an occasion when this influence could be used to ends of the highest dignity. This is the eternal problem of tyranny as touched upon at the end of the last chapter. Everyone somehow feels that ends justify means and hence the value of tyrannical power; but universal human experience teaches that evil means so rarely attain the ends which justify them that a total renunciation of dubious paths of conduct seems to be in order. And certainly Isocrates teaches that in all ordinary instances this must be the rule of conduct. The common sense

⁵⁷Philip 81.

standards of justice employed in the polis are the rules of decent living and Aristides as human type is Philip's superior. But in the case of the moral bankruptcy of the polis these standards can no longer strictly apply. One is again in the condition of the founders themselves and the demands of the establishment of the circumstances in which justice prevails are not always the demands of justice. Isocrates does not indicate, as Hobbes and Rousseau would, that justice is not natural to men and that men are rather forced to it at the price of an outrage against their free natures. He argues that our natures are susceptible to it in themselves and need it perhaps more than anything else but that this tendency needs a favorable soil in which to grow--namely the polis. Otherwise the combination of passion and scarcity will corrupt the sources of just living. It is just these passions that Isocrates uses in the Philip in his great attempt to re-create the Trojan war, the pre-condition of renewed Greek political life. He approaches the tyrant with great prudence, offering him nothing he could misuse or turn to evil. Philip was already powerful and mixing in the affairs of Greece. He actually suggests actions that would temper Philip's intentions for Greece. But he does accept motivations he refuses elsewhere; he does lower his standards in liberating the passions. He justifies this in offering a goal which all men admire and to which they can all adhere. The grandeur of the project casts a shadow of forgetfulness over the means he employs. His habitual impeccable propriety can be converted into the coin of political cunning when no one can question the nobility of his ends. One can learn something of this technique from a great reader of Isocrates--Machiavelli. The

poetic climax of The Prince with its similar call for a great war of unification rallies all patriots to the acceptance of the means proposed in the body of that evil book. The dazzling future blinds the moral eye to the road that must be traversed.

The pan-Hellenism is Isocrates' issue, the issue through which we can see the deepest levels of his thought. It is at this point where we begin to touch the most sensitive and paradoxical aspects that he presents. This is where Isocrates' thought necessarily leads to reflexion about Isocrates himself. For since Philip is only a raw material, it is Isocrates himself who is the statesman. In the Panegyricus and the Philip he is no longer commenting and advising about the existent and the real, he is making as well. It is his theme, the goal he brings into political life. Philip is nothing without Isocrates while Isocrates still has his grand idea without Philip. It is Isocrates who fabricates the great war that can transform *πλεονεξία* into *δικαιοσύνη*. He brings himself to the center of the stage. In one way or another we shall from now to the end of this study be preoccupied with Isocrates' notion of himself.

Although Isocrates presents the grand project to Philip in the most material of terms, it is evident that he does not consider the simple gain involved enough to sway Philip to his advice. He counts on another element in Philip's character to lead him naturally to the acceptance of the plan--his greatness of soul, his ambition, or his desire to be loved and respected by all men. Isocrates seems to assume that in the leaders of men there is a certain love of honor that motivates them to do great things, deeds that will

strike awe into the common run of men.⁵⁸ This passion can push to either good or evil, the desire is to distinguish oneself. It is the spur to tyranny, to lording it over one's fellow-citizens and forcing their unwilling adulation. It is not a just motivation in itself; it is an essential offshoot of *πλεονεξία*. But this love of honor can be converted into a passion for noble honor. Ambitious men are dangerous in a city because they are essentially self-interested; they would destroy the egalitarian institutions for the sake of their personal repute among men. However, this same species of man, already in a position of power, can be made to desire great and just goals because that is the sole fashion to win real respect and glory. A moment's reflection will show that the great majority of tyrants gain nothing but hatred and their memories are objects of eternal execration.⁵⁹ Men who have used their might to aid the poor and miserable, or who have founded great cities with just laws are, on the other hand, loved and cherished by all men; poets perpetuate their memories unto all ages; they partake in all the pleasures of this life and the next. It is only very rarely that a man simply wants money or power; perhaps the path to them is sometimes so difficult that they begin to seem like ends in themselves; but it is a commonplace of all moral thought that they in themselves can never bring satisfaction. There is something in even the blackest of knaves which is akin to a passion for glory; who would not want to be remembered as Theseus or Heracles are remembered? And if one

⁵⁸ *Panathenaicus* 81-82; *Evagoras* 3; *Philip* 106-108. On the unjust nature of this character cf. *Panathenaicus* 142-44, and on the relation of tyranny to *μεγάλη φροσύνη* cf. *Evagoras* 27.

⁵⁹ *Philip* 144-145; *Peace* 91ff; *To Nicocles* 4-5.

thinks it out a bit, it appears that no matter what the motivations may be, a man in order to satisfy this thirst must perform just and noble acts--he must be a benefactor of humanity. Men will not love you if you murder and rob them; but if you give them security and wealth you are likely to be deified by them. Virtue seems to solicit all human motivations to herself. Isocrates offers to Philip the greatest human glory imaginable; he in fact allows him to compare his future to that of gods. Isocrates' scheme fits in perfectly with Philip's mad ambitions. He shows him the only road to the fulfillment of his unarticulated hopes. The first half of the speech Isocrates devotes to carefully establishing himself as a man of practical judgment leaving to the side all lyrical elements. But toward the second half, he starts appealing to Philip's secret wishes and in a rising crescendo up to the end reveals to him his possibilities. It is interesting to note that these hard-headed monarchs, who so condemn the susceptibility of the mob, have such fantastic dreams, going so far as to rival with the gods. Philip's moment is unparalleled in history; never before has there been an occasion to completely destroy the threat of Barbarism and to rehabilitate Greekness in its full flower. Beside this the Trojan war was but a bagatelle and thus the glory incumbent on its accomplishment should be commensurately greater than that gained by the most classic of Greece's heroes. The only comparable figure is Heracles the archetype of virtue and heroism; the man most loved by all.⁶⁰ In the pan-Hellenic speeches Isocrates frees the passions

⁶⁰ Philip 114-115; 118; 123-126; 133-136; 140-143; 149-152. The Prodicus tale about Heracles' choice between virtue and vice (as cited by Xenophon, *Memorabilia* ii.i.21-34), must have been well known to all in the fourth century. Isocrates sets a similar

and bases his hopes on the attractiveness of his project to lead men the long way around back to virtuous conduct. The desire for glory properly conceived implies at least the use of virtue. And it is Isocrates' function to make men aware of this necessity. Philip must do what Isocrates says in order to win his cherished glory.

It is the motivation of *φιλοτιμία* to which Isocrates appeals in the most serious part of the Philip. He shows that this is to be the theme of the speech in his own statement of the reasons for writing it. He says he wrote it because of his own *φιλοτιμία*;⁶¹ in the Peace his reason is the benefit of the Athenians. He tries thus to show Philip that he is like him; he behaves as though the only possible reason for acting is the love of honor. That men will act reasonably in accord with this desire is not at all guaranteed, but that it is the strongest possible motivation is assured. It is something men can feel; it is strictly self interested; it does not require the support of the good habits of the civic life which was so corrupted; as a matter of fact it is the desire to have more than others. How much this element is the tool of persuasion in the case of men of Philip's type is shown in the second letter to him, a letter presumably written after Chaeronea, the moment when Philip could do all he wanted. The letter is about glory and it is said that the insatiable desire for it is the only human desire the insatiability of which is not detestable.⁶² If Philip is to listen it will only

choice before Philip in using the example of Heracles and outlining, in a subtle way, the dangers which lie before him.

⁶¹Philip 12.

⁶²Letter iii. 4-5. He also tells Philip that he will have nothing left but to be a god when he has conquered the Barbarians. In Letter ii 2, Isocrates says that the Philip was about reputation.

be in hearing the music of his own praises sung. This is the reason that Isocrates must implicitly depreciate Homer and laud himself. Homer's heroes are competitors with Philip and Isocrates must be able to make Philip greater than them. In a large measure he depends on Isocrates to make and preserve his glory. And Isocrates explicitly refuses to praise him until he has performed his deeds.⁶³ We must not forget Isocrates' role in presenting the plan and making the man.

After this analysis of the functions and techniques of the Philip, we may return with the knowledge we have gained to the all important question of the purpose of the Panegyricus. As shocking as the contention may seem, the evidence forces us to conclude that the Panegyricus is not meant to be taken seriously as a practical proposal for a pan-Hellenic campaign. According to Isocrates' own testimony it was given when Athens' fortunes were at their lowest ebb and Lacedaemon ruled Greece with a seemingly iron hand.⁶⁴ The practical possibility of Athens' becoming the leader of Greece was nil; that Athens was deserving could have no more effect on their gaining the leadership than the virtues of the Swiss today have in their gaining the leadership of the free world. Added to this is the observation we have already made that the speech gives no practical proposals for the attainment of the alliance. It cannot be argued that Isocrates was simply launching the idea and preparing the state of public opinion because Isocrates himself says that the idea was already well worn and that what was needed was practical proposals. The whole element of power, as represented in the Philip,

⁶³ Philip 153.

⁶⁴ Antidosis 57.

is missing. The Philip, the letter to Dionysius, and the Peace act as silent critiques of the Panegyricus in this regard.

To add to this first impression are the comments Isocrates makes about the sort of audience which he is addressing.

. . . I have determined in addressing my discourse to you at the same time to set an example to my disciples and make it evident to them that to burden our national assemblies with oratory and to address all the people who there throng is, in reality, to address no one at all; that such speeches are quite as ineffectual as the laws and politeiai drawn up by the sophists; and, finally, that those who desire, not to chatter empty nonsense, but to further some practical purpose, and those who think they have hit upon some plan for the common good, must leave it to others to harangue at the public festivals, but must themselves win over someone to champion their cause from among men who are capable not only of speech but of action and who occupy a high position in the world--if, that is to say, they are to command any attention.⁶⁵

The Panegyricus, as its very title tells us, is a speech designed to meet the needs created by the great festivals where "more sleep than listen."⁶⁶ Nowhere in all his works, outside of the Panegyricus, does Isocrates praise this particular type of audience. The occasion is rather one of displays of talent than one where practical plans can be developed. The object of the displays is to please and one cannot look to such discourses for the serious core of his thought. The speech is a praise of Athens for Athenians.

. . . some will say that all this is spoken "prettily" (for they will be too grudging to say "well"), but that those discourses are better and more profitable which denounce our present mistakes than those which praise our past deeds, and those which counsel us what we ought to do than those which recount ancient history.⁶⁶

To understand this somewhat better it might be well to cite the savage criticism by pseudo-Longinus of Isocrates' boasts in the Panegyricus.

⁶⁵Philip 12-13.

⁶⁶Antidosis 62.

Isocrates did not know what a childish thing he fell into on account of the ambition which made him want to say everything in a grand manner. The theme of his Panegyricus is that Athens surpasses Lacedaemon in benefits conferred upon Greece and yet at the very outset of his speech he uses these words: "Further, λόγος have so much power that it is possible to make the great things seem humble and to invest the small ones with grandeur, and to speak about the old things as if they had just happened and about the newly come to pass as though it were ancient." "Do you then, Isocrates," it may be asked, "mean in that way to interchange the facts of Lacedaemonian and Athenian history?" For in his eulogy of λόγος he has, we may say, published a preamble warning his hearers to mistrust him.⁶⁷

Now, a serious reading of this critique in conjunction with the text referred to cannot fail to convince us that pseudo-Longinus is right. It is really a curious claim on the part of a man who sets out to convince us of something that he is a past-master of distortion. The entire power of the speech to produce conviction vanishes after Isocrates announces that it is a product of sheer rhetorical skill. The only thing one can object to pseudo-Longinus is that perhaps Isocrates is wiser than he and that, although his analysis of the effect of the phrase is correct, it is possible that Isocrates knew exactly what he was doing and had a deeper purpose that was not understood by his famous critic.

It is all too clear that the purpose of the Panegyricus is to win repute for Isocrates and his rhetoric. It is thus understandable why Isocrates praises rhetoric and its power to the detriment of the persuasiveness of his speech. If it is he himself and his admirable art that are to conquer the admiration of the assembly, then he had to make it evident that it was not the intrinsic quality of the subject matter that was so remarkable but the hand that formed that matter.⁶⁸ It is to be remarked that the Panegyricus

⁶⁷Pseudo-Longinus xxxviii 2.

⁶⁸It is interesting to observe that Fenelon appears to have

begins and ends with a discussion of Isocrates. The speech is given where men come to win honor, the noble contests among the Greeks. Isocrates does not follow Gorgias in giving unqualified praise to the founders of the festivals. He rather seconds Xenophanes in criticizing the absence of prizes for wisdom although the works of the mind are by far the most important human thing.⁶⁹ He asserts that he is not discouraged by this situation and bases his hopes for glory on the speech itself and the honor it will win him. Thus the purpose of the speech is to establish a place among the Greeks for wisdom as represented in the person of Isocrates. He chose a subject that would make him appear a benefactor to all men and praised his own city thus winning the gratitude of his fellow citizens. If the speech does not, and could not, have a practical effect it is evident that it fulfills the object Isocrates designed it for. He says it made him envied and it was imitated incessantly.⁷⁰ He established by the speech a place for his teaching. He ends the speech with a call to others to study with him and to emulate him. He thus attracts students to himself; an effort which seems to have succeeded. Drawn by the beauty of his speech and the repute of its maker, a school formed itself around him.

It is sometimes hard for us to imagine with what pride the ancient wise men envisaged their arts, how important *λόγος* was for them. Isocrates' worth is generally evaluated in relation to the

regarded Isocrates as one of the rhetoricians who spoke only for their own glory and therefore regarded him as a man of no use to the city. (Premier Dialogue sur l'Eloquence [Paris: Hachette, 1850].)

⁶⁹Gorgias, B7; Xenophanes B2, H. Diels Fragmente der Vorsokratiker (5th ed.; Berlin: Krantz, 1935).

⁷⁰Philip 10-12; Panathenaicus 16; Antidosis 46-49, 74, 86-88.

political affairs in which he involved himself. But he himself seems to have regarded his art as the most important thing with which he occupied himself. One must only remember the claims of Gorgias or Plato concerning their own professions to realize the possibility of this position. We must discuss Isocrates' evaluation of his profession to comprehend how it is possible that he could subordinate the seemingly all important political life to his philosophy; and thus we can confirm in some measure our conclusions about the Panegyricus.

C

The first, but rapidly diminishing, impression that one gains from Isocrates is that he is a very modest man who comments on political affairs and educates young politicians--having chosen this type of life uniquely because he was not endowed with the proper capacities for political life. His pursuits seem a sort of second best way to influence his fellow citizens. There are, as witnesses to this, the facts that most of his speeches concern politics and his thrice repeated statement that he was not endowed with the daring that politics demands. We have already analyzed in the first chapter the ambiguous character of this statement and its relation to Isocrates' reflections on daring. Now it might be added that in each instance he makes the statement in a place where he must explain away his quiet life--twice to tyrants who evidently have respect only for men of practical activity and once before the Athenians who trust only those who are like them.⁷¹ His need for private

⁷¹Philip 81; Letter 9; Panathenaicus 9-10.

life can be most easily justified by physical incapacity; people who lead private lives are by their very nature suspect. Isocrates' most explicit statements are not often the most revealing because he was constantly defending himself and his studies from a series of misunderstandings. The modesty of his approach is the protective coloring of his pretensions; he will be taken more seriously if he presents himself as a humble adviser to affairs more important than he is.

The first level on which the pride of Isocrates starts appearing is seen in a speech like the To Nicocles. Isocrates teaches Nicocles as though he were ignorant as a baby. He prescribes a whole course of life with an air of unbending superiority that never changes in tone. It is clear that Isocrates considers himself as distinctly superior to Nicocles. The Nicocles, where Nicocles himself expresses his thoughts, recognizes the ultimate superiority of philosophy to every other pursuit, thus presenting Nicocles' supposed conviction of Isocrates' superiority. Philosophy is the complete discipline, the only thing specifically human in man. And it is the man who studies philosophy who will be the wisest in political affairs. The good adviser is the sine qua non of decent political life, and so, by a peculiar turn, the adviser of the rulers becomes more important than the rulers themselves. The man who tells the cities of their evil acts is he who should be most honored by them.⁷²

To this extent Isocrates' claims to higher honor are to be easily understood. The predominance of logos over ergon, its

⁷²Nicocles 1-11; Antidosis 253; 174-175; Peace 39-40; 72-73.

priority as implied in every important human affair, makes his logoi, which are the best logoi, the prerequisites and supports of political life. The Philip can be evinced in proof of this. Philip and his power are mere raw material, a commodity which always exists somewhere, while the definition of the pan-Hellenic project and its presentation in a beautiful or convincing manner can only be done by the very few wise. Philip is contemptible insofar as he only represents physical power or the body. And to be added to the powers of Isocrates as represented in the Philip is his ability to make famous whom he will. Since the aim of Philip's type of man is immortal glory, they are dependant on him in their hopes. "For these [mediocre men who are famous] found their poets and storytellers and the others [men deserving of honor who are not famous] have no one singing their praises."⁷³ The importance of Homer for his heroes goes without saying and one can well wonder who was the more and better remembered, Achilles or Homer. Isocrates is in measure to make cities well governed, to make men famous for ever, and further to please the multitude. He hence deserves the gratitude and respect of all men.

Now, in political life, lawgivers are the most important single individuals. All that comes after is a result of their genius; they have given, to use the phrase of Isocrates, the soul to the city. Nobody has the occasion to be as great as the founder for all the others work within the framework set by him and in a sense work toward the glory of his institutions. The highest possible

⁷³ Antidosis 137; consider the introduction and the conclusion of the Evagoras.

political ambition is that of being a great founder, a Theseus or a Lycurgus. But Isocrates, the man without daring, dares to say that he is greater than the founders. His art applies to all men whereas laws are by their nature limited to this or that group. His task is the more difficult because there are now many laws but very few people who can find what must be said and how to say it.⁷⁴ The universality of the art is the exact parallel of the pan-Hellenism which is the union of all men, that is to say all men who have humanized themselves, against that which threatens their humanity. One might say that it is the preservation of Isocrates' art for which they will fight.

Thus far the limitations of politics are those of Isocrates; but consideration of the following two passages suffices to show that it was not simply physical incapacity that kept his orator off the platform.

For I desire to accomplish two things: to gratify my children and further to make it clear to them that even if they do not become orators in the assembly or generals, but merely imitate my manner of life, they will not lead neglected lives among the Greeks.⁷⁵

For I have prescribed this course for myself, not because I am rich or arrogant, nor because I look down on those who do not live after my fashion, but because I love quiet and freedom from affairs, and most of all because I see that men who so live are in good repute among you and among others too. Moreover I consider that this kind of life is pleasanter than that of men who are doing many things, and that it is more in keeping with the occupations to which I have devoted myself from the first.⁷⁶

His work implied both for its perfection and his own pleasure a withdrawal from the ordinary life of citizenship. The entire

⁷⁴Antidosis 81-83.

⁷⁵Letter viii.10

⁷⁶Antidosis 157.

Antidosis attests the life of a man who avoided the burdens of living with his fellows as much as possible. He performed all the acts required of a decent man because he was just, but all that is only negative. He did not participate in anything he was not forced to participate in by either law or propriety. It seems he was oppressed by the necessities of civic life and cut them to the bare minimum. He was by no stretch of the imagination comparable to his own conception of a good citizen; a man who is formed by his city and whose ambitions are limited to the highest honors which the city has to offer. His honors and pleasures are private and he expresses, not in word but in deed, a contempt for the men who live as citizens. There is indeed something subversive about a man who does not identify himself with the city's aspirations and whose thought looks for the approval of the universal community of the wise, that community whose judgment might well be at variance with the voice of the public assembly.⁷⁷ Isocrates knew this and that is why he defended so often and so variously his philosophy. It is not in our purpose here to discuss that thought and what it may or may not have been; this is the most complicated problem and we reserve the end of this work for it. We only hope to demonstrate that at the side of the all-engulfing and all demanding political life there is another aspect of humanity, the art that attempts to gain the knowledge of the goddess of persuasion,⁷⁸ which can occupy a man fully and is, or at least sometimes seems to be, at odds with the political life. Isocrates is eager to persuade that knowledge of his philosophy is

⁷⁷ Evagoras 74 cf. Panathenaicus 261.

⁷⁸ Antidosis 249-250.

finally essential to political life but it is evidently not simply co-extensive with it. The man who practices it is non-political and advises his children, who presumably do not have the same incapacities as he, to be the same. He would die for his philosophy; he never says he would do the same for his city.⁷⁹ Something that we might call "culture" is all important for him. That is the specific element of the truly good life and the city implies a certain compromise with vulgarity. The private life of study is the best life and it follows that there are some men who transcend the need for the polis. This is proved with all the clarity one could demand when one of the most serious political speeches ends with this catechism: "[all those who are capable of writing speeches should work] to turn the Greek cities to virtue and justice, for when Greece is in good times the affairs of philosophy are far better off too."⁸⁰ Virtue and justice and, so to speak, all human life are directed toward philosophy. Isocrates occupies himself with the city for the sake of philosophy, not philosophy for the sake of the city.

There is a long and very important passage in the Panathenai-cus which states most eloquently Isocrates' opinion of himself.

Argos [produced] Agamemnon, who was possessed, not of one or two of the virtues merely, but of all which anyone can name--and these, not in moderate, but in surpassing degree. For we shall find that no one in all the world has ever undertaken deeds more distinctive, more noble, more important, more advantageous to the Hellenes, or deserving of higher praise. . . . I choose to come to the aid of this man who has experienced the same misadventure as myself and many others and failed of the reputation he deserved, and who has been the author of the greatest services to the world of his time, although less praised than those who have done nothing worthy of mention.

⁷⁹Antidosis 177; 51.

⁸⁰Peace 145.

For what did he lack who held a position of such honor that were all the world to unite in search, they could not find greater? For he alone was deemed worthy to become the general of all Hellas. Whether he was chosen by all or took it himself, I cannot say. But however this came about, he left no room for the rest of mankind who have in any wise won distinction since his time to surpass the glory which attaches to his name. And when he had obtained this power, he harmed no city of Hellas; nay, so far was he from injuring any one of them that, although he took command of the Hellenes when they were in a state of mutual warfare and confusion and great misfortune, he delivered them from this condition, and, having established concord (*ὁμόνοια*) among them, indifferent to all exploits which are extravagant and spectacular and of no benefit to others, he collected the Hellenes into any army and led them forth against the Barbarians. And no one will be found, among those who rose to fame in his time or in later generations, to have accomplished an expedition more honourable than this or more advantageous to the Hellenes. But although he achieved all this and set this example to the rest of the world, he did not receive the fame which was his due, because of those who delight more in stage-play than in services and in fiction than in truth; nay, albeit he proved himself so great, he has a reputation which is less than that of men who have not ventured even to imitate his example.

But not for these things alone might one extol him, but also for the things he did at the same time. For he conceived of his mission in terms so lofty that he was not satisfied with making up his army from all the men in private station whom he desired to have from each of the cities of Hellas, but even persuaded men of the rank of kings, who were accustomed to do in their own states whatsoever they pleased and to give orders to the world at large, to place themselves under his command, to follow him against whomsoever he might lead them, to obey his orders, to abandon their royal manner of living and to share the life of soldiers in the field, and, furthermore, to imperil themselves and wage war, not for their own countries and kingdoms, but in word for Helen, wife of Menelaus, though in deed for Hellas, that she might not again suffer such an outrage at the hands of the Barbarians nor such as befel her before that time in the seizure of the entire Peloponnesus by Pelops or of Argos by Danaus or of Thebes by Cadmus. For what other man in the world will be found to have had forethought in these matters or to have taken measures to prevent any such misfortune in the future except one of Agamemnon's nature and power?

There is, moreover, connected with the above achievement one which, though less significant than those which I have mentioned, is more important and more deserving of mention than those which have been extolled again and again. For he commanded an army which had come together from all the cities of Hellas, a host whose size may be imagined since it contained many of the descendants of the gods and of the direct sons of the gods--men who were not of the same temper as the majority

of mankind nor on the same plane of thinking, but full of pride and passion and envy and ambition--, and yet he held that army together for ten years, not by great bribes nor by outlays of money, by which means all rulers nowadays maintain their power, but by the supremacy of his genius, by his ability to provide from the enemy subsistence for his soldiers, and most of all by appearing to counsel better about the safety of others than they about their own.

But the final achievement by which he crowned all these is no less worthy of admiration. For he will be found to have done nothing unseemly or unworthy of these exploits which I have already described; on the contrary, although he waged war, in word against one city, but in reality not only against all the peoples who dwelt in Asia but also against many other races of the Barbarians, he did not give up fighting nor depart for home before reducing to slavery the city of him who had offended against Hellas and putting an end to the insolence of the Barbarians.⁸¹

Now it must be remembered that this is a speech which is carefully written and must be carefully read because it is full of subtleties according to Isocrates' own witness. It is also another one of the speeches which begins with a defense of philosophy and ends with a call to study. It purports to be a praise of Athens. Isocrates cannot praise himself without exciting the hostile envy of others. But in the middle of this seemingly senile work--this speech that has so long been regarded as the last effort of a very old and worn out man even though he himself thought it was very good--he permits himself a digression that those who think he is senile will pass over with a smile but those who are convinced he is serious and clever will stop and ponder. He points out clearly that he thinks it is irrelevant and also daring. He says that Agamemnon was unjustly not praised, having suffered the same fate as he himself. Could it be that Isocrates dares to give to the unpraised Agamemnon the praises he dared not give to himself, cloaking his audacity under

⁸¹Panathenaicus 72-83.

the appearance of debility? If we examine this praise of Agamemnon we will find that there is not a single element which could not apply, mutatis mutandis, to the grand Isocrates himself.

He begins by using almost the same terminology about the value of the deeds performed by Agamemnon as he used in the beginning about his own activities. He adds, however, that these activities deserve the greatest praise. Agamemnon had an honor such that "even if all the world united in the search, they could not find greater"; this honor is the counterpart and proper adjunct of one who has chosen subjects or actions such that even "if all the world should unite in search they could not find greater or nobler or more beneficial to all", i.e. Isocrates.⁸² Agamemnon alone was general of all Greece, whether he was given it or took it himself is of little importance. One can think of the Isocrates who wrote the Panegyricus when all the statesmen of his time were occupied with their own cities' private interests. He established himself the leader of all Greece. He did not injure the cities but proposed a campaign which would bring benefit to all. He got no reputation because people like to be pleased more than benefited. Isocrates and Agamemnon are one on all these points.

Further, they both had the pride to go out of their individual cities and recruit kings for their campaigns and forced them to live as subordinates. Philip, Dionysios, Archidamus, and Nicocles are members of Isocrates' army. The speeches in which Archidamus and Nicocles speak show how Isocratean they have become. And these men were not as other men but full of passion and love of honor.

⁸² Panathenaicus 11-14.

(This incidentally shows why Isocrates had to lower the moral standards in the pan-Hellenic speeches and substitute certain glorious goals in order to recruit his army). Their power was based on their being able to think and counsel better than others and on their capacity to provide for the army from the land of the Barbarians (e.g. Isocrates' insistence that the campaign could be fought on the substance of the Barbarians). And most important of all they claimed they were fighting against only one group of Barbarians but in reality they were combatting for Greekness as such against Barbarism itself.

It must be remembered that when Isocrates speaks not of the Great King but Barbarians he means men who are not civilized, that he refers to man's eternal conflict with bestiality in others and in himself. Being a Greek means in large measure to participate in the type of arts which he himself practices.⁸³ This passage recognizes Agamemnon's greatest accomplishment to have been that of protecting Greece from Barbarization. His criticism of the Lacedaemonians in the Panathenaicus is that they destroyed the cities of men who represented that struggle. One of his main griefs against them is that they are not men who cultivate the arts.⁸⁴ Isocrates' Agamemnon is a man who saved Greece for culture. And Isocrates presents himself as his parallel but in a different sphere. Isocrates' campaign was not with troops but with minds. He attracted many men to reading him and studying with him by saying in word that he wished to fight the great king, but in deed the result was to produce

⁸³Panathenaicus 163; Panegyricus 47-50; Antidosis 293-294.

⁸⁴Panathenaicus 45-46; 208-209.

statesmen and philosophers who were an invincible wall against Greece's rising tide of Barbarism, an external and internal danger coeval and co-extensive with civilization. If one interprets this passage with these reflections in mind he can hardly fail to see what a perfect description of Isocrates it actually is. The language used is the same as he uses about himself and his art in numerous other passages. We shall soon see how much the goal of the Panathenaicus also conforms with such an interpretation. It is in such lofty political terms that he is able to conceive of his non-political activities. Isocrates is the commander of a great army designed to protect humanity from subversion by Barbarism. It was possible for Isocrates to succeed without any actual army ever going into the field. The crucial point is not that some Greek should take the place of Ataxerxes but that civilization should exist. And it is at least debatable whether Plato, Aristotle, and Isocrates did not do as much for the preservation of our humanity as all the grandeurs of Alexander and Rome.

Isocrates says that his speeches attracted students to him on account of their grandeur and because they seemed to them to be an indication of the wisdom of their writer. He does not claim that he has a formula for teaching virtue, but that the existence of certain passions can conduce to virtue.⁸⁵ The three passions are ambition, love of persuasion, and desire to have more than others πλεονεξία. When a student has these motivations, Isocrates has the tools to reform their characters and make something out of them. It is in the first place to be observed that this list is roughly

⁸⁵ Antidosis 274-275; cf. Against the Sophists 21. Isocrates does not educate in political discourses in order that men should speak well but the study of political discourses is a means of teaching virtue.

equivalent to a list that Isocrates gives in the Antidosis as the only reasons why men do wrong.⁸⁶ These are driving forces that lead men to act and by using them Isocrates can turn them to higher goals. It hence becomes readily comprehensible why Isocrates has written as he has in the Panegyricus and the Philip. He appeals to these actually base emotions which are potentially convertible. The passionate leaders among men are the sort who are at first attracted by political ambition. It is for this reason that Isocrates speaks of philosophy in almost the same words that he represents a student of his using about tyranny.⁸⁷ One can well recall Aristotle's remark in the Politics concerning crimes, where he says that the only way to be fully satisfied without being criminal is to practice philosophy.⁸⁸ The tyrannical type of man, according to this view, is tending toward something the correct understanding of which is philosophy. In the Peace Isocrates makes an effort to prove that *πᾶκορυσία* is to be found in justice and piety, a purely political view. In the Antidosis he abandons this effort and identifies it essentially with philosophy.⁸⁹

The young have been impressed with Isocrates' standing and that is why they come. They want to persuade people and be applauded and thus become pre-eminent. Isocrates is a man who is admired and talks with the greatest of men as an equal. He even presents himself as the leader in the greatest political affairs. Studying with such a man they can have great hopes of doing even better, especially

⁸⁶ Antidosis 217.

⁸⁷ Panathenaicus 244, Antidosis 246. The Evagoras which praises tyranny as the greatest possible human good and appeals quite evidently to tyrannical tastes ends with the assertion that the speech will lead to philosophy (40 and 73-77).

⁸⁸ Politics 1267 all-12.

⁸⁹ Antidosis 282 to the end. Isocrates says in effect that

since they plan on direct participation in politics. These are noble but not necessarily virtuous young souls. They are the best possible raw material. In their studies they will soon recognize that in order to be truly great they will have to propose political plans of the most humanitarian nature and of the most vast proportions. They will study great men and realize that their famous deeds always had a moral character and they will be forced to reject petty notions of grandeur; they will not want to be hated tyrants in their particular cities or simple demagogues. No man who wants fame and recognition could rest content with Agathocles or Critias after he has once learned of Cyrus and Moses. Their imaginations will fly to the horizons of human potentiality--they will think of Theseus and Heracles. They will reject their former notions, engendered by their contemporaries, as vulgar and juvenile. To really possess that which they want they must be benefactors of mankind.⁹⁰ And perhaps some of them will begin to admire that virtue itself which made their great models famous. And, finally, perhaps some will commence to admire even more that science which has understood these things and content themselves with the life of Isocrates.

The teacher's role in this process, in addition to attracting the students in the first place, is to watch over the students, show them the forms to be used, and direct their studies in general. And he will write speeches as examples of the best style.⁹¹ And

πλεονεξία is justice and that the just pursuits are those followed by his students.

⁹⁰Antidosis 276-280.

⁹¹Against the Sophists 16-18; Antidosis 183-195.

here is to be found one of the most serious reasons for the existence of the Isocratic orations. They are examples to be studied and imitated. In proof of this is the striking number of times Isocrates refers to himself in all the speeches, describes what he is doing, how he is doing it and why. How many speeches begin and end with discussions about Isocrates? And it has been remarked that these interventions often have an academic air. They are academic! And this is why the speeches seem sometimes so impractical, general, and lacking in particular facts. A student reading the Areopagiticus learns many things: how to speak to Athenians; what is wrong with the Athenians; what are the fundamentals of good political life. It is a course in political theory as it were. The student afterwards has some standards for practical activity but he has not learned what practical actions to take because these vary with the situation. Having learned these things through a speech, the student has had to think to penetrate the intentions behind it and has learned also the techniques of speaking to men. Similarly in reading the Evagoras one learns what men have to do to be famous. I believe that there is not a single speech among the Isocratic works which is not made more intelligible on the basis of this line of interpretation. Their abstract character is a result of the fact that they are only political in the second degree; they influence men who are going to influence politics.

Isocrates' speeches have the function of recruiting students and educating them. As a body they illustrate the entire range of political problems and nuances. One learns from them but not as one learns from Demosthenes; if a doctrine were drawn from his

speeches the result would be something like the Politics of Aristotle or the Laws of Cicero rather than a statement of fourth century actualities. It is because this has been forgotten that Isocrates has been the object of misunderstanding and neglect. When a Rousseau cites Isocrates he understands him in the defined sense; but in recent times we look for that which is not there and do not look for what is there. As a commentator or journalist Isocrates falls short of any reasonable standard; but as a theorist of political things he is exceedingly profound.

How the pan-Hellenism fits into this is quite evident. Even the Philip is at least partly directed to teaching his students what is necessary for great political deeds and showing them how to talk to tyrants and kings. And Isocrates was bound to be admired and envied for being able to talk to the great Philip on an equal footing and telling him what to do. The Panegyricus has been sufficiently discussed in this regard. Its success, and Isocrates seems to regard it as such, was a rhetorical one. It established his reputation, brought students, and taught something about human nature.

D

The relation of pan-Hellenism to philosophy can best be seen in the development of the classic antinomy between Athens and Sparta as it is treated by Isocrates. Athens and Sparta were the great opponents in Greece and it is around the differences between these two pre-eminent cities that Isocrates has developed much of his thought. He treats of the subject cautiously because he was an

Athenian citizen and simple prudence led him to state his views very carefully. He was at the same time a serious thinker and truth knows no national boundaries so that he does present his beliefs concerning the question in such a way that they will be clear to the intelligent reader after sufficient reflection. Unfortunately the common sense meaning of the conflict between Sparta and Athens has been obscured in modernity, thus dulling the cutting edge of Isocrates' arguments. In the last two centuries there has been a progressive re-evaluation of these cities due to the growth of democratic political theory and practice. Athens' stock stands very high because we see in her the germinal point of our treasured liberties and Sparta's repute is correspondingly very low because she represents a reactionary way of life. The ancient admiration for Sparta is no longer understood and she is interpreted simply as a power that must be studied because she played an historical role, never as a standard for political life. Sparta has even been compared to Nazi Germany. From classical antiquity, up through the Eighteenth century, all to the contrary, Sparta was regarded as the outstanding example of a politeia and at least on a par with Rome, as the question is posed in the famous exposition of Polybius. Athens, on the other hand, was never regarded as a political example nor was she ever seriously praised on this basis. This comparative evaluation was held almost universally in the history of political thought. Rousseau's comments on the Spartans scattered throughout his works and especially in the Lettre sur les Spectacles are ample evidence for this contention. It requires an intense effort at historical recovery for us to comprehend this

evaluation, but if we do not make such an effort we run the risk of mistaking not only Isocrates but also the whole ancient viewpoint.

The admirable Pierre Bayle states the ancient case with his inimitable clarity in this way:

On a vu ailleurs que Thomas Hobbes, voulant inspirer aux Anglais quelque dégoût pour l'esprit Republicain, fit une Version de Thucydide. Cette pensée n'était pas mauvaise; mais il eut encore mieux fait s'il eut composé un Ouvrage de l'état intérieur d'Athene. . . . on se persuaderait que ce peuple, qui se piquoit tant de liberté, était dans le fond l'esclave d'un petit nombre de cabalistes qu'il appelloit Demagogues, & qui le faisoit tourner tantôt d'un côté, tantôt de l'autre, selon qu'ils changeoient de passion.⁹²

On the first level of interpretation there can be no question that Isocrates shares the view of Bayle about Athens and, in its turn, has a relatively high regard for Sparta.⁹³ The first chapters of this work attempted to expose his views on the character of good citizenship and the best ways of life. The Spartans lived in conformity with these ways and had a career of 700 years duration without changes in laws or revolutions, while supporting their traditions, living in *ὁμόνοια*, and practicing civil and military virtue. Athens was the contrary of all these things and the short epoch of her greatness contained all the seeds of her downfall. When Isocrates speaks to Athenians he makes all this clear by the defensive way in which he presents himself. When he transports us to Lacedaemon by means of the Archidamus, we see a politeia which deliberates seriously about its affairs, where there are no demagogues, where the youth respects its elders, the people are religious, and the common good is the highest goal of all the

⁹²Dictionnaire 2252b.

⁹³Areopagiticus 61; cf. Busiris 17.

citizens; in a word, an uncorrupted city. I do not believe that Isocrates seriously criticizes Sparta in any of the strictly political, non-pan-Hellenic, speeches. He does not speak of her often directly for fear of a laconizing reputation. He criticizes her external policies, but he never dares to attack the Spartan politeia in any speech other than the Panathenaicus and his constant use of her institutions as a standard is silent praise. It is extremely doubtful whether he actually believed that the so-called ancestral politeia was born in Athens because he changes his account of it whenever it suits his interests. The supposed fact that it is truly Athenian is a guaranty of his loyalty when he criticizes Athens; he thus rebukes Athens in the name of Athens. If acceptance, in heart and soul, of the principles of the constitution of one's homeland is the criterion of loyalty, as it certainly is, Isocrates was not a good citizen of Athens.

Sparta is the best polis, but when Isocrates discusses foreign policy or external affairs his judgment changes completely. The Panegyricus compares Sparta and Athens without discussion of internal affairs or the best way of life for a city. He investigates simply the benefactions that the two cities have made to Greece. This is a parallel question to the issues which we saw were the causes for the entire pan-Hellenic project. External affairs, or foreign policy had been the cause of the changes in the politeiai of the cities and had necessitated a certain transcendence of the city in order to preserve it. And when Isocrates enters into this area of political discussion, Athens has no competitor in his

eyes. The Spartans appear as having acted only for themselves whereas the Athenians always excelled in warm and generous acts. The Athenians are internally evil and externally good according to the Isocratic account. The genius of Athens had covered all the possible spheres of humane acts and she had proved herself the defender par excellence of Hellenism. It makes no difference that Isocrates did not strictly believe in his own characterization of the Athenians in the Panegyricus. What is important is that his mode of description constantly shows a tension between Athens and Sparta which passes beyond their simply political opposition, Sparta representing good political life and ill conduct toward her neighbors, and Athens representing bad political life and good conduct toward her neighbors. This tension is very revealing as to Isocrates' notion of the nature of politics. It can be best studied in the Panathenaicus, the only speech where the discussion of Athens and Sparta combines the two aspects of internal and external policy.

The Panathenaicus purports to be a praise of Athens and a criticism of Sparta. However the reader will experience great difficulty in finding the praise of Athens. The Lacedaemonians are, however, viciously attacked. The speech begins with a long discussion of Isocrates and his beliefs. He then turns to the praise of Athens and recounts her very ancient good deeds, deeds beyond the range of historical recollection. For all the historically verifiable stories, the technique used is that of a comparison and contrast between Sparta and Athens, and the largest body of the speech is given over to proving that Athens had done less evil than Lacedaemon, which is hardly a manner of praising. If the

Athenians destroyed Melos, the Spartans created the decarchies, etc., etc.⁹⁴ This is a tacit way of accepting the truth of the allegations made against Athens and the result is a devastating criticism of Athens. If there is a difference between Athens and Sparta, the choice is between evils, and Isocrates admits that since the Persian wars the two cities had been the causes of the greatest misfortunes to the Greeks. The Athenian mythical past is the only secure arena of her glory. The Panathenaicus is a sequel to the Panegyricus in that it shows that although Sparta acted only for her self-interest in her relations with other states, Athens had for more than a century been acting in the same fashion and there was little to choose between the two cities. Even the Persian wars which make up the center of the Panegyricus sustain an objection because the Athenian success caused the empire and the destruction of the politeia. It becomes extremely difficult to grasp in what real sense the Athenians are superior to the Spartans except in terms of stories, *μῦθοι*.⁹⁵

The question of internal politics, politeiai is brought in to the discussion on the barest of pretexts.⁹⁶ Isocrates assumes

⁹⁴Panathenaicus 53-73; 95-101, 156-163.

⁹⁵It is amazing when one recognizes the fact that Athens since the Persian wars is never once praised by Isocrates in all his work and the only speech that is at all favorable to Athens is the Panegyricus. Isocrates says at the end of the Panathenaicus that he was distressed by what he had said about the Lacedaemonians but was satisfied with what he had said about Athens (231-232). The student understands the speech as a praise of Athens for the many and a praise of Sparta for the wise. Finally, the introduction of the Helen insists that defense is not a praise, that their forms are different. This being the case, the Panathenaicus cannot be a praise of Athens--it admits wrong-doing and praise is about the irreproachable.

⁹⁶Panathenaicus 108ff.

that other people, the defenders of Sparta, will insist on raising it, so he too must broach it. He makes no attempt to defend the existing politeia but praises the ancestral politeia. In this account the ancestral politeia was created by Theseus and ended in the times of Solon and Pisistratus. In the Areopagiticus, it is Solon who was its creator; thus the story is moved out of the realm of all historical justification to a time of perfection which exists more in word than in deed.⁹⁷ Now, Isocrates admits that these are exactly the same institutions as those actually used by the Spartans although he denies that it was Lycurgus who invented them; Lycurgus only copied the Athenian institutions.⁹⁸ The practical effect of this admission is evident: Sparta has a good politeia, Athens does not. Up to this point we have seen that Athens and Sparta both do evil to their neighbors, and Sparta has gotten more out of it because she has maintained her internal equilibrium and has the best institutions. The conclusion would seem to follow that Sparta is decisively superior to Athens. And on a strictly political level this is true; but the issue is not as simple as that.

Isocrates' criticism of Sparta is, at its barest, that the Spartans did well for themselves and evil to their enemies. This is a perfectly conventional criticism, but he exposes it in a very unconventional way--in a way that calls into question the whole

⁹⁷ Panathenaicus 150. . . . *εἰς καταστάσιν εἰς
ἐλεγχον καὶ λόγον δυνήθεσιν ἂν, ἐπιδείξαι πάντας
ἀνθρώπους πλείους ἐπιστήμας ἔχοντας διὰ τῆς
ἀκοῆς ἢ τῆς ὀφείας, καὶ μέγας πράξεις καὶ καλλίων
εἰδότης, ἅς παρ' ἑτέρων ἀκηκόασιν, ἢ ἰκενίας αἰσίου
παραγεγνημένοι τυγχάνουσιν.*

⁹⁸ Panathenaicus 150.

status of political life and morality.

. . . having learned from the actual course of events that while according to the laws cities and lands appear to belong to those who have duly and lawfully acquired them, in truth they go to those who are most practised in the arts of war and are able to conquer their enemies in battle--thinking on these things, they neglected agriculture and the arts and everything else and did not cease laying siege to the cities in the Peloponnesus . . .⁹⁹

According to this statement, the Lacedaemonians had an insight into the nature of reality; they understood that the rights of property are simply conventional and that men can gain satisfaction by breaking the ordinary codes of morality. The usual way of treating this problem would be to say that although they had made some gains in this way they had lost in the long run, that their souls would suffer, or that the gods would punish them. But Isocrates comes very close to the conventional position in this passage. The accepted morality is only an appearance and in truth it is the mighty who profit. Justice is the benefit of the weak. As to the gods, Isocrates admits that they sin.¹⁰⁰ This means to say that the gods do not support morality, that there is not a divine assurance of the goodness of just acts. This would be unthinkable in the Peace or the Areopagiticus where Isocrates accepts without hesitation the moral standpoint of gentlemen, who are sure there is a divine assurance of their judgments of acts and persons. The story of the establishment of the Spartan politeia follows exactly the same standards.¹⁰¹ The Lacedaemonians destroyed the old

⁹⁹Panathenaicus 46.

¹⁰⁰Ibid. 64; this statement is repeated, understandably enough in talking to Philip (Letter i116)

¹⁰¹Ibid. 177-181.

inhabitants of the land they invaded, took their lands, and followed the most Draconian measures imaginable in enslaving the poorer classes in order to establish their celebrated unity, *ἁμόνοια*. They then pursued an utterly military policy, the source of "great losses to the vanquished and great gains to the vanquishers".¹⁰² So was founded the best political order, the kind of city which Isocrates so often and so well lauds.

The goal of the Lacedaemonians was *παιονεσία* and they seem to have gained it. Amongst themselves the Lacedaemonians live a just life, but when one considers them in their relations to others there is a shadow cast upon the nature of justice. The *politeia* of the Spartans, their *ἁμόνοια* --in what do they differ from those of a band of robbers?¹⁰³ Is not the justice of the cities identical to an expression of collective egotism? Is not injustice a concomitant factor in the founding of any good city? All this re-raises the question of the naturalness of the city, which we have so long taken for granted: is the city in conformity with nature or is it a clearing cut out of a forest of natural injustice by the main force of man? The consequences of the description of Lacedaemon would seem to lead to the conclusion of Machiavelli that civil life implies injustice and that there is a natural conflict between men. The cleverest in the struggle are the ones who gain the most and they lead the most satisfactory lives. This is just the conclusion that the excellent student of Isocrates draws from the *Panathenaicus* and recommends the right of the

¹⁰²*Panathenaicus* 183.

¹⁰³*Ibid.* 225-227 cf. *Peace* 50.

stronger as the best way of life. The statement of Thrasymachus in the Republic of Plato is the locus classicus for this argument. Isocrates is not so kind as to inform us whether the student has correctly understood the intent of his speech or not.¹⁰⁴

We must therefore, on our own, attempt to outline a response to the question on the basis of the hints that Isocrates has given us. His very criticism of Lacedaemon gives us to understand that if the political question is left at the response of Lacedaemon there is not a sufficient base to call for the respect of men nor their adherence to the standards of justice. The actual cities of Greece could not satisfy men's search for justice nor was it evident by their conduct that the city is a naturally good way of life and preferable to the way of life of the man who attempts to take advantage of the city by tyranny or that of the man who lives on the fringes of civil society avoiding it as much as possible because he thinks it an unnatural constraint to his pleasure. Isocrates suggests two possible solutions to the problem as posed. The first is the hypothesis of the perfect beginnings of civil society with the cities becoming corrupted afterward by the viciousness of men.¹⁰⁵ The gods must have been the creators of the best ways of life, if there are truly gods; they gave them to man without the injustice that was required in the founding of Sparta. If there was a golden age, it stands as the proof of the naturalness of the perfection of man in justice and the eternal possibility of a good city. Accordingly Isocrates accuses his student of impiety in not

¹⁰⁴Panathenaicus 265.

¹⁰⁵Ibid. 203-207.

recognizing the primacy of the gods and it is this tack he takes in his presentation of the Panathenaicus. He is a very, very old man, an image of ancestral tradition. He demonstrates the excessive goodness of the ancient past and the men who lived in it. Athenians were autochthonos, thus they had no need to conquer unjustly the land that they inhabited. Their politeia was created by Theseus, the son of a god, who trained the people gently to democracy without enslaving any of the citizens. The Athenians were strong and secure and were thus able to benefit all men. In such circumstances no criticism of Athens like that of Lacedaemon could be made. It was a perfect civil life because there were no contradictions and no need for *πλεονεξία* at the expense of others. Isocrates follows the Greek tradition in creating thus an "ideal" city, one that stands as a pattern of justice, created because of the unsatisfactory character of all existing examples. It is essentially a city in *λογισμῶ* rather than one in *ἐργασίᾳ*. Which leads us to the second possible solution suggested by Isocrates. The best ways of life must have been found by intelligent men through the progress of the arts and crafts.¹⁰⁶ Now the Lacedaemonians practice nothing but the arts of the body. They live all the time like a military camp. They are less cultivated than the Barbarians and they conscientiously reject all intellectual achievements. If it is impossible that men live well without the practice of their souls, then the Lacedaemonians could not represent the best way of life and the city of philosophers would be decisively preferable to that of the Lacedaemonians. And it is here that we find again a thread that

¹⁰⁶Panathenaicus 208-210.

can lead us back to an understanding of why Isocrates continues to preserve the Athenian element of the alternative between Athens and Sparta when Athens has so little to recommend her politically. The real praise of Athens is that she is the mother of the arts, that it is in Athens that philosophy found her home.

For you, yourselves, are pre-eminent and superior to the rest of the world, not in your application to the business of war, nor because you govern yourselves best or most preserve the laws handed down to you by your ancestors, but in those qualities by which the nature of man rises above the other animals, and the race of the Hellenes above the Barbarians, namely that you have been better educated than others in wisdom and logoi.¹⁰⁷

It is important to note that these two solutions are mutually contradictory. The good old city rests on ancestral traditions that are unchangeable and existed before the founding of philosophy, while philosophy depends upon constant newness, change, and progress.¹⁰⁸

Tradition is authoritative and implies a submission of the individual to the past of the whole community; it is founded upon common agreement and does not admit of questioning by reason. Lycurgus set down laws for Sparta and all succeeding generations looked to his institutions as to divine truths. Philosophy, on the other hand, knows no authority and accepts no tradition as given; the philosopher would recognize in Lycurgus no special title to

¹⁰⁷ Antidosis 293-294.

¹⁰⁸ "We praise the oldest of laws and the newest of λόγοι ." (Antidosis 82.) The Evagoras praises change and daring in the arts (Evagoras 7) whereas all the political speeches praise constancy of law and tradition. This explains the optimism and forward looking quality of the pan-Hellenic discourses which are philosophic in character and the restraint of the political discourses which accept the past as best.

wisdom: prescription may be a sign of the social efficacy of a belief but it does not prove its truth. The philosopher is an individual and his reason does not incline itself before the opinions of the city; he seeks the truth which is perhaps shared by only a few and which is in all probability far away from the opinions sanctioned by time and the voice of the assembly. Tradition is a sort of political equivalent of revelation and the philosopher can accept it no more than he can revelation. Tradition is the tradition of this city here and now; philosophy belongs to all men at all times and knows no loyalties beyond itself. Tradition is particularly fitted to this city and conduces to the preservation of its way of life; philosophy is universal and as such does not care for preservation of this or that city. The philosopher is essentially alone and isolated; he does not, as philosopher, care for his city as a citizen cares for it. Citizenship and philosophy seem to spring from heterogeneous roots in man, the one having to do with his needs for society, the other with his passion for truth; the city represents in essence the fulfillment of the needs of the body, philosophy those of the soul.¹⁰⁹ The problem is well illustrated by the fact that philosophy flourishes in corrupt cities where authority has deteriorated and the philosophers are free to do what they like and have the minimum of responsibility to the civil society, whereas, in Sparta, Isocrates would have had no time to do the sort of things he did. The good, law-fearing citizen is

¹⁰⁹The military practices of the Spartans are completely physical in character. Isocrates always considers the soul higher than the body and correspondingly philosophy than gymnastics (Antidosis 180-181). Cf. Letter viii 5.

quite a different species of man from the philosopher; the comparison of Aristides and Socrates should give evidence to this. Both are impressive human types, but it is difficult to combine them.

Sparta is superior as a way of life for most men; but as we have seen its existence implies injustice and when intelligent men understand this they can no longer have undivided loyalty to the ways of their city. Philosophy, as Isocrates understands it, has this advantage: it alone can justify the political life by reconstructing the original justice of the city. Although Theseus understood the politeia in his deeds it was only Isocrates who understood it in his words and could give an account of it.¹¹⁰ The simple early times lacked a reasonable understanding of justice and it required the "experience of man and his corruption to develop philosophy. The early times would have been simply preferable if philosophy had existed in them, but it did not. It required Athens with her tormented history to arrive at Isocrates. And the defense of Athens and the story of her original justice is, after all, a creation of Isocrates. The real difference between Greek and Barbarian is one of humanity and philosophy and without this distinctive difference the battle between them loses its higher significance.

But, at the same time, the political life must be preserved. The philosophic critique of political life must not permit the destruction of political life itself. Its value is attested to by all human needs and the undeniable, although qualified, dignity of

¹¹⁰ Panathenaicus 138. The understanding of political life, and hence also its rehabilitation, imply the existence of Isocrates.

Spartan life proves the importance for men of the polis. Therefore Isocrates presents himself as the defender of political life in the Panathenaicus. He shows that the evil represented by Sparta is not a necessary concomitant of politics. As a defender he must show himself also as a reformer since the existing cities are inadequate. His life work was to make a combination of Athens and Sparta. The Areopagiticus brings the Spartan constitution to Athens and the Archidamus shows what Sparta would have been like with an Athenian educated king.

To resume: Isocrates' thought is characterized by a constant antinomy between the needs of philosophy and those of the city. This is most clearly expressed in the relation between Athens and Sparta and that of speeches like the Areopagiticus and the Peace and those like the Panegyricus and the Panathenaicus. These two poles are necessary but not always simply complementary as is indicated by the fact that it is most frequently in the most corrupted cities that one finds philosophy. Philosophy is an activity primarily of only a few people. The point at which the need for philosophers, as distinguished from lawgivers, became necessary was in the foreign relations of the cities, the great difficulty of having truly just relations with one's neighbors. This is exactly where we noted that the pan-Hellenic idea also found its origin. The pan-Hellenism is at least a partial response to this problem of justice to one's neighbors. The ideal solution to the universal pretensions of justice would be a world state where the same rules apply to all; but since the polis cannot overextend itself without destroying itself, a federation of poleis with a motivating

goal can approach this ideal of justice. At the same time the *πλεονεξία* that the student insists is the goal of men can be satisfied without moral chaos.¹¹¹ This is a philosophic solution to political problems; it combines Athens' culture and cosmopolitanism with the good political life of the Spartans. One can understand that Plato had exactly the same goal in the Republic when he urges the Greeks to treat one another like brothers and treat the Barbarians like they were used to treat one another.¹¹² This is a solution which satisfies the need for justice between cities and also fulfills the natural combativeness, or viciousness, of men. It is not, however, completely satisfactory because it means mistreating the Barbarians, some of whom might not be natural slaves, capable of governing themselves well, and inventors of arts.¹¹³ Plato immediately after stating his position on the war against the Barbarians turns to the discussion of the philosopher-kings and the complete fulfillment of the political life in them.

Isocrates does something similar in showing us that the sole true way of having *πλεονεξία* is to practice philosophy. This is why he has used the double standard of morality in his speeches. The lower morality that is expressed in the relations between cities when carried to its final conclusion results in the study of philosophy; and philosophy can in its turn return to the justice of the good city and provide it with a solid base. Only philosophy is truly universal and at the same time even the particular cities need as their legislators and crowns the men who understand the

¹¹¹Consider Panegyricus 183-84.

¹¹²Republic 471 c

¹¹³Nicocles 24; Panathenaicus 209.

questions in some larger sense. The pan-Hellenic speeches insensibly lead politicians to have broader ambitions and some of them to realize that both their ideals and ambitions will be best fulfilled in an understanding similar to that of Isocrates. His school will produce both statesmen and philosophers. Thus the broadness, the warmth, and the generality of the pan-Hellenic speeches are designed to appeal to the motivations which lead to great political actions and to the study of philosophy. Their bearing goes far beyond the importance of this or that particular plan for a Hellenic war against the Barbarians; they represent the importance of the mind in all human affairs, an evident fact that is often forgotten by the cities. If he expected that his plans would have a practical effect in his time cannot be known for certain; he was a very prudent man and was never sure that power could be trusted to employ itself wisely. If someone had presented himself as the champion of his ideas he would have been without doubt pleased; but the most important thing for him was that he keep the flame of culture alive.

Isocrates never seems to have felt that his pan-Hellenic ideas were a failure; it is his philosophy which seems to have been the subject of his cares. Throughout his life, up to the very last speech, his worry seems to have been that his philosophy was misunderstood. The pan-Hellenism was only one means to the preservation of something far more important than any conquest or even any city--that is the preservation of that level of humanity that had been developed only in Greece and which, it became evident in the fourth century, was worth more than the glory of any city or the success of any political plan. He was satisfied that he had

well enough served the city if some prudent statesman emerged from his school. He was not messianic and hence did not expect the transformation of political reality overnight. Therefore the campaign against the Barbarians was only secondary. It was one good suggestion among others made by a non-political man who accepted for a moment the postulates of politics. But above all for him was that in his school Greek culture be kept alive and that through his speeches some might be attracted to philosophy and others might develop a right opinion about his teaching. This is the true pan-Hellenism--the defense of civilization against Barbarism. The affairs of the cities would always admit of improvement as long as his spiritual children are alive.

CHAPTER III

RHETORIC AND PHILOSOPHY

A

An analysis of Isocrates' political thought leads irresistably from the political arena into the more cloistered areas of his philosophic reflection. Even his simplest orations resist reduction into simply practical political terms; the reader is constantly forced to ask questions that one would not ordinarily be forced to put to political orations; his suggestions are always so far-reaching that they raise the most fundamental questions of political theory and there is never a serious indication of their practicability. The Isocratic works are suspended somewhere between ordinary politics and academic study and it is just this precarious balance which makes them a problem for interpretation in a way that the orations of Demosthenes and Aeschines are not problems. From the first origins of human society up to our own time and probably as long as humanity will exist, there has been and will be a need for counsel, the assembly of the sovereigns in a city organized for the purpose of deliberation about the most important common affairs. It is a matter of the simplest common sense understanding to grasp the intent of the wise and eloquent words of a great statesman. Be it a Pericles or a Churchill who speaks, the idea of the political oration is as clear to us as it was to the Greeks. But anyone who attempted to interpret the Panathenaicus

after this fashion would find himself in great difficulties as evidenced by the fact that many modern readers have been reduced to calling him a journalist. Although this title perhaps serves to distinguish him from the other Attic orators who were all statesmen or lawyers, it hardly clarifies the issue. Besides the fact that his reflection is obviously deeper and more comprehensive than that of any known journalist and that the speeches do not have the character of actuality that a journalist's commentaries have, it is absurd to think that in antiquity there was a species of being comparable to the modern journalist; journalism has to do with certain more recent notions concerning the dissemination and vulgarization of knowledge as well as of the status of public opinion which were not shared by our Greek ancestors. Political action was always conceived of as being properly carried on within the political institutions of the assembly and the council and by influencing privately the most powerful men. It is just this natural tendency to read back into history the phenomena which are most obvious to us that is most likely to bury the hidden differences that are the most incomprehensible.

The question must be posed directly: why did Isocrates write politikoi logoi? It is only when this question can be answered definitively that one can pronounce finally on the intent of the logoi. What did he expect to accomplish by means of his orations and why was the sort of study which he pursued the one most needful for truly educated men?

It might be proposed that Isocrates was a teacher as well as a writer and that he devoted himself to preparing men for the

most important thing--political life. His speeches could then be understood as examples of his writing. This interpretation would be in some respects true but it does not go far enough insofar as it does not help to explain the substantive content of his thought. He evidently did not merely teach men to speak but there was a content to his doctrine which was more important than the speechmaking. Further, if Isocrates really believed political life was the highest thing he could have hardly regarded his own style of life as so dignified as he did nor could he have conceived of his role as any thing more than ancillary to statesmanship.

Now, it is a matter of commonly accepted opinion that Isocrates was a rhetorician, a student of Gorgias. And he is always understood from this point of view. This is indeed a reasonable category provided that one knows what rhetoric is according to Isocrates. It can be safely said that it is neither political discourse as such, nor is it Belles Lettres because purely literary questions were of no interest for him. If his profession were that of rhetorician or teacher of rhetoric we must understand rhetoric in its obscure and complicated beginnings when it was somehow allied to philosophy and had pretensions to being the philosophic study of politics. Isocrates says he is a philosopher and it has been shown that this was above all else for him;¹ he never calls himself rhetor, a title he reserves for statesmen. Conversely, Cicero call Socrates and Xenophon orators. At the beginning of

¹Isocrates never calls himself rhetor and twice explicitly says he was not one (Philip 81, Epistle viii 7). The demagogue is the equivalent of the δηττωρ (cf. Areopagiticus 4, Peace 129, Antidosis 30, Panathenaicus 15 for typical usages of the word). The only time Isocrates uses the term δητορικός it means a man who can speak well before a multitude (Nicocles 8, Antidosis 253).

the fourth century the fields of knowledge had not yet rigidified the bounds of their specific disciplines; each claimed to be the one thing needful for perfect human existence and each pretended to an adequate understanding of the most important things.

As Cicero says, prior to Socrates rhetoric and philosophy were the same thing, inextricably bound up with one another.² One need only look at the Clouds of Aristophanes to prove this: the art which makes the worse cause appear the better is treated as part and parcel of the discipline which investigates the nature of the heavens. Isocrates himself gives witness to this; when he speaks of Gorgias he does not hint that this was Greece's most famous teacher of rhetoric; he mentions him only as a speculator about the nature of being.³ One generation later Aristotle wrote his Rhetoric in which he placed rhetoric in a strictly ancillary role to politics; with Aristotle rhetoric becomes simply the tool of a science that sets up the framework in which it works and its ends--the architectonic science of politics. The subordination of rhetoric presupposes the emergence of an authentic political science which appropriates the ancient claims of the art of speech. After Aristotle, rhetoric pursued its own course, never again to seriously pretend to the throne of philosophy; many interesting speeches and much important literary criticism was to come from its centers but it could not be comprehended as a study of the good for man. It is hence that Isocrates lived through the crisis of rhetoric, throughout the period when it was receiving its death-blows at the hands of Socrates and Plato. His long span of years

²De Oratore iii 6.

³Helen 3, Antidosis 268.

touched on both the generation of Gorgias and that of Aristotle.

It is of central importance to understand the nature of that crisis in order to understand what Isocrates' conception of rhetoric was. The most revealing document we have concerning it is the Gorgias of Plato. In it Socrates takes his most intransigent stand against rhetoric, ridiculing it, and placing it in relation to the legislative art as the art of cosmetics is in relation to gymnastics or cookery to medicine, that is to say a mere sham used to fool people for no good end.⁴ The serious argument underlying this characterization does not concern the character of writing or speaking: Socrates was himself an orator of consummate skill and resorted to all the standard techniques. The question of real import is whether rhetoric involves an understanding of the virtues or, in other words, the science of politics.

Gorgias, in the dialogue, presents himself as a proponent of the true understanding of politics; he promises to educate men in such a way that they will be competent to fulfill their political goals. Socrates refutes his claim relatively easily without ever going to the heart of the matter by asking him if he teaches his students virtue too. Gorgias says that he would certainly teach that too if it were necessary. He is immediately confuted because his assertion that he would teach virtue was only half-hearted, he had never thought through what virtue meant nor what the consequences of taking one's orientation by it would be. It is obvious he does not really regard it as an integral part of a true political

⁴Gorgias 463a-466a.

doctrine. He gave it his faint praise out of a prudent regard for the sentiments of the common run of humanity, who, if they do not like to practice virtue, feel reassured by hearing it praised.⁵ Polus carries on the discussion in the spirit, if not the manner, of Gorgias. The gist of his intervention is that justice is not equivalent to the good for man or that the end of political life is power no matter how obtained. The conclusion that one must draw from the argument of Gorgias and Polus is that they did not believe that the polis could be profitably understood in terms of justice and injustice because what were for them the most valid political goals implied essential injustice.⁶

The argument is brought to its deepest level by Callicles who asserts that it was only shame that led Gorgias to agree to teach virtue because of his fear of public opinion. As for himself he believes that the justice of cities is a conventional restraint to the fulfillment of the naturally superior. He thus brings the discussion back to the ancient distinction between nature and convention. The city according to his account is fundamentally based on compacts made by men, agreements which do not reflect the natural order of things. Justice is nothing but the expression of man's fear before a universe in which only the strong are free. It is hence that the rhetoric which can manipulate the assemblies according to the will of the strong would have a justification solidly grounded in nature. If there is not a natural hierarchy of goods which governs civil society, men have a perfect right to act in it as they will and are able. In this perspective rhetoric, from being

⁶Gorgias 473c-474b.

flattery, becomes the one essential tool of politics.⁷

The argument of the Gorgias moves from the question of simple rhetoric, whether it is useful or not, to the deeper underlying question the Gorgian answer to which is the ultimate justification of his conception of rhetoric. He himself is not willing to state the issue because it is not a moral view and he would not be permitted to teach in the cities if the parents of his students understood what his position implies. The bolder Callicles states the pre-Socratic notion of the distinction between nature and convention. The light of nature is destructive of the conventional understanding of human things.

To God all things are beautiful, good and just; but men have assumed some things to be unjust, others just.⁸

Hence the political is a sort of chaos which was not taken into consideration by the most serious of the pre-Socratic philosophers who sought to keep away from the unnecessary restraints of civic life and pursue their understanding of the truth in escaping from the man-imposed shadows of the city. There could not be a political science because, for the ancients, unless there is a natural good there can be no real orientation in political life. All political acts are done with a view to some good and if the good is merely an opinion, a product of senseless and varying passions, sometimes erected into institutions, there can be no valid reason for a man's adherence to the common good. It is for this reason that it is no accident that Isocrates counts Gorgias among the pre-Socratics and pictures him as a representative of a nihilistic cosmological

⁷Gorgias 482c-483c; 491e-492c.

⁸Heraclitus, Diels B 102.

theory which would render a political science impossible.⁹

However, as the figure of Callicles represents, men are inclined to take political life very seriously in spite of all this. Most men live in cities and very often they are ambitious for glory whether this goal has any real value or not. And it is here that rhetoric is the highest science of politics makes its entrance. It cannot be a study of the laws of the city because these have neither value nor attraction; but there is a certain order to be found nevertheless. The political ambition is essentially one directed toward statesmanship; everyone who is interested in public affairs considers them from the point of view of the men who are in power. If the standards do not emanate from a higher source they emanate from the men who create the laws and make policy. An art of statesmanship would hence have as its content primarily the use of words because it is by words that statesmen act. Their ideas and ends would be their own but their capacity to make them accepted would depend on this skill. If the principles of government of the various cities cannot be universalized into a science, at least the crafts of the demagogues in their public action can be made the subject of an art. It is this art of which Gorgias professes to be a teacher and from this point of view his claim becomes quite understandable.¹⁰

It would be impossible to interpret here the full bearing of the Socratic revolution and we can only pretend to mention some

⁹Helen 3; Antidosis 268. It is evident that, consequently developed, this would lead to extreme moral anarchy.

¹⁰Gorgias, 452a-453a; 455d-456c.

of its effect on the understanding of rhetoric. According to the famous phrase of Cicero:

Socrates was the first to call philosophy down from the heavens and set her in the cities and bring her also into the home; and he compelled her to ask questions about life and morals and things good and bad.¹¹

Socrates reinterpreted the classical distinction between nature and convention. He was able to force his interlocutors, even Callicles, to admit the natural character of the moral distinctions reflected in the laws. He proved that it is impossible to act or to speak without a conception of the good which is more than arbitrary. He gave justice a footing in nature that made it impossible to comprehend the political sphere without principles that are beyond simple human control. With such a new defense of the political life it is impossible to regard rhetoric as the one thing most needful for political life. It is evident that a study of politics would imply in the first place an understanding of justice. If, as Socrates maintained throughout his life, it is better to suffer injustice than to do it, a man must have passion to understand the nature of the just which overpowers any other desire, otherwise a good life is impossible. Within the city it is necessary to know what is good before its implementation can be thought about; in this light Socrates can well call rhetoric simple flattery because it accepts human passions as they are; there are no things it would not be willing to do because it is based on the view that regards suffering injustice as the worst of all possible evils.¹²

¹¹Tusculan Disputations v 5 10 cf. Brutus 31.

¹²The unmoral character of rhetoric and its orientation

This does not imply that Socrates rejected rhetoric entirely. He, as well as any other man, knew the importance of persuasion both for the creation of a just order and for the defense against injustice. But he insisted that rhetoric must be guided by this higher understanding in order to have any real sense and to avoid being simply pernicious. This is the theme of the Phaedrus; only the man who is motivated by a passion for an understanding of the most important things is capable of attaining a true rhetoric. It is this eros that Gorgias lacks, although Callicles has it in a perverted form.¹³ It is not important how a man writes, whether it is laws or poems or speeches. The question is whether that of which he treats is understood in relation to the nature of the good. It is perfectly possible that Solon or Homer were greater philosophers than those who write philosophical treatises. The sole criterion is the understanding from which the written work stems.

Go and tell Lysias that you and I came down to the fountain and sacred place of the nymphs, and heard words which they told us to repeat to Lysias and anyone else who composed speeches, and to Homer or any other who has composed poetry with or without musical accompaniment, and third to Solon and whoever has written political compositions which he calls laws: If he has composed his writings with knowledge of the truth, and is able to support them by discussion of that which he has written, and has the power to show by his own speech that the written words are of little worth, such a man ought not to derive his title from such writings, but from the serious pursuit which underlies them.

Phaedrus: What titles do you grant then?

Socrates: I think, Phaedrus, that the epithet "wise" is too great and befits God alone; but the name "Philosopher" or something of the sort would be more fitting and modest for such a man.¹⁴

toward the defense against injustice and intrinsic disinterest in doing the just unless it is subordinated to the virtues is clearly demonstrated in the introductory discussion of Aristotle, Rhetoric i. 1. 3-5; 12-13.

¹³Gorgias 481c-482c.

¹⁴Phaedrus 278b-4.

Aristotle states the Socratic response to the rhetorical question non-paradoxically in the introduction to his Rhetoric: the art of rhetoric is of very great value in the service of truth and justice. This implies that it does not itself know the true and the just in whose service it necessarily is. The Rhetoric of Aristotle presupposes the existence of his Politics.

Thus the battle between Socrates and Gorgias is not one between rhetoric and philosophy but rather between two differing understandings of the nature of civil society. It is of course probable that, since rhetoric in the highest Socratic sense becomes identical with political philosophy in its entirety, the specific crafts connected with speaking, which in Gorgias' view had a much larger place, should become a separate and degraded art. It is important here only to underline the fact that rhetoric is a profession perfectly compatible with a thoroughgoing Socratism. Rhetoric can reflect a Socratic understanding of things as well as the Platonic dialogue. And one must remember that Isocrates, who calls himself philosopher, not rhetorician, says he chose his style of writing because all men "know that the power of these speeches is drawn from philosophy."¹⁵

Isocrates' rhetoric must be seen in relation to this epic struggle. He could not have been unaware of the Socratic critique but yet he brought rhetoric to its greatest flowering. His teaching pretended to all the glory that Gorgias' did. Did he simply reject the powerful arguments of Socrates' or was he a man who refused to take into consideration the sort of philosophical argument

¹⁵ Antidosis 48.

that both Gorgias and Socrates admitted was necessary to the grounding of any claim?

Isocrates was evidently very much influenced by the Socratic teaching. He was affected to such an extent that he no longer even attempted to maintain an argument for the art of speaking. He does not mention any of his students who became great speakers and specifically says this was not his aim.¹⁶ He says that the men who spend their time in the law courts are the warpers of justice and those who make epideictic orations do a useless thing and "praise the basest of the things that are and the most lawless of men."¹⁷ But his major attack is reserved for the rhetors. They are the men who flatter the mob, who only speak for the pleasure of those who wield the power. They are the most dangerous possible class of citizens and are the causes of war and injustice. They are the signs of the corruption of the people and only a city which can do without them can have a healthy constitution. Isocrates manifests a scorching contempt for their whole race and tries to show that they are the enemies of truth. His attack closely parallels that of Socrates in the Gorgias and the Republic.¹⁸ He himself prefers to fail for the just cause. His interest is in making men good, not in teaching them how to speak.

¹⁶Against the Sophists 21, Panathenaicus 28-29. The list of students in the Antidosis 93-94 concerns those who served the city well and not those who could speak. Timotheus (ibid. 101 ff.), his favorite student, was a failure as a speaker.

¹⁷Against the Sophists 19-20, Antidosis 36-39, Philip 12, Panathenaicus 271, 263, 135.

¹⁸Peace 129-135, Antidosis 136-137.

Now those who compose hortatory discourse addressed to their own friends are, no doubt, engaged in a laudable employment; yet they do not occupy themselves with the most vital part of philosophy. Those, on the contrary, who point out to the young, not in what way they may practice cleverness in words, but how they may appear to be men of serious character, are rendering a greater service to their hearers in that, while the former exhort them to speech, the latter improve their conduct.

. . . it will be seen that I take more pleasure in those of my disciples who are distinguished for the character of their lives and deeds than those who are reputed clever in speech.¹⁹

Isocrates' political action is guided by political goals which do not depend on the passions. It is in fact the passions that are the elements with which rhetoric is at war.

Isocrates' whole political life represents an attempt to use rhetoric in the service of the establishment of a good political order. His political principles exist prior to the use of rhetorical art nor are those principles simple reactions to particular problems. There is a whole doctrine concerning political life which remains essentially the same throughout all the speeches, stated in many different ways but always using his general conceptions of the political virtues to the best avail in each particular case. It has been shown that the pan-Hellenic ideas have for their serious political content an effort to lead the Athenians back to a more stable mixed regime.

To see the Socratic origins of Isocrates' political preoccupations one may turn to the famous chapter in Xenophon's Memorabilia in which Socrates chats with Pericles, son of Pericles. They discuss the means to instill a passion for their ancient virtues in the Athenians:

¹⁹Demonicus 3-4, Panathenaicus 87.

"Well," exclaimed Pericles, "if they are now in the mood for obedience, it seems time to say how we can revive in them a longing for the old virtue and fame and happiness."

"If then," said Socrates, "we wanted them to claim money that others held, the best way of egging them on to seize it would be to show them that it was their father's money and belongs to them. As we want them to strive for pre-eminence in virtue, we must show that this belonged to them in the old days, and that by striving for it they will surpass all other men."

"How then can we teach this?"

"I think by reminding them that their earliest ancestors of who we have any account were, as they themselves have been told, the most valiant."

"Do you refer to the judgment of the gods, which Cecrops delivered in his court because of his virtue?"

"Yes, and the care and birth of Erectheus, and the war waged in his day with all the adjacent country, and the war between the sons of Heracles and the Peloponnesians, and all the wars waged in the days of Theseus, in all of which it is manifest that they were champions among the men of their time. You may add the victories of their descendants, who lived not long before our own day: some they gained unaided in their struggle with the lords of all Asia and of Europe as far as Macedonia, the owners of more power and wealth than the world had ever seen, who had wrought deeds that none had equalled; in others they were fellow-champions with the Peloponnesians both on land and sea. These men, like their fathers, are reported to have been far superior to all other men of their time."

"Yes, that is the report of them."

"Therefore, though there have been many migrations in Greece, these continued to dwell in their own land: many referred to them their rival claims, many found a refuge with them from the brutality of the oppressor."

"Yes, Socrates," cried Pericles, "and I wonder how our city can have become so degenerate."

"My own view," replied Socrates, "is that the Athenians, as a consequence of their great superiority, grew careless of themselves, and have thus become degenerate, much as athletes who are in a class by themselves and win the championship easily are apt to grow slack and drop below their rivals."

"How, then, can they now recover their old virtue?"

"There is no mystery about it, as I think. If they find out the customs of their ancestors and practise them as well as they did, they will come to be as good as they were; or failing that, they need but to imitate those who now have the pre-eminence and to practise their customs, and if they are equally careful in observing them, they will be as good as they, and, if more careful, even better."

"That means that it is a long march for our city to perfection. For when will Athenians show the Lacedaemonian

reverence for age, seeing that they despise all their elders, beginning with their own fathers? When will they adopt the Lacedaemonian system of training, seeing that they not only neglect to make themselves fit, but mock at those who take the trouble to do so? When will they reach that standard of obedience to their rulers, seeing that they make contempt of rulers a point of honour? Or when will they attain that harmony, seeing that instead of working together for the general good, they are more envious and bitter against one another, and would rather make profit of one another so than by mutual service, and while regarding public affairs as alien to themselves, yet fight over them too, and find their chief enjoyment in having the means to carry on such strife? So it comes about that mischief and evil grow apace in the city, enmity and mutual hatred spring up among the people, so that I am always dreading that some evil past bearing may befall the city."

"No, no, Pericles, don't think the wickedness of the Athenians so utterly past remedy. Don't you see what good discipline they maintain in their fleets, how well they obey the umpires in athletic contests, how they take orders from the choir-trainers as readily as any?"

"Ah yes, and strange indeed it is that such men submit themselves to their masters, and yet the infantry and cavalry, who are supposed to be the pick of the citizens for good character, are the most insubordinate."

Then Socrates asked, "But what of the Court of the Areopagus, Pericles? Are not its members persons who have won approval?"

"Certainly."

"Then do you know of any who decide the cases that come before them and perform all their other functions more honorably, more in accordance with the law, with more dignity and justice?"

"I am not finding fault with the Areopagus."

"Then you must not despair of Athenian discipline."²⁰

In this passage can be found the germs of the themes that Isocrates dwelt on in all his dealings with Athens: the attempt to find in the past of Athens the virtues that are needed in the present in order to make it a question of local pride is recommended as the most effective rhetorical technique. (Socrates does not suggest that these stories need be true. This is merely the way to persuade). It is just this that Isocrates does in the Panegyricus

²⁰Memorabilia iii v 5-20.

and the Panathenaicus and elsewhere. (This is similarly the case with Plato's Menexenus which has, moreover, very many elements in common with Isocrates' praises of Athens, e.g. Athens is called an aristocracy, a very unusual description.) The myths used so frequently by Isocrates are all referred to here. The corruption of Athens and its particular forms are brought out here, and the nature of the Isocratic preference for Sparta and its politeia are clarified. And, finally, most striking of all is Socrates' indication that the proper nucleus for a renaissance in morals is the Areopagus.

This passage has too many elements in common with the political views of Isocrates to be a simple accident; what is more it puts the details in the same rhetorical framework. Isocrates' exhortations to the Athenians are but a refinement and expansion of the program stated here. Socrates obviously gave him much of his political orientation.

Isocrates hopes by an education in political discourse to awaken the lights of virtue in the noble young. His education leads to virtue; it is not that the young who are vicious can be taught virtue. Justice is not a technique that can be passed on by the repetition of a few rules; it is only a man who does not take the understanding of virtue seriously who could agree to sell it.²¹ It is a long process of habituation; even in learning to speak, nature and practice are more important than a teacher. But in spite of all prudent reserve, the concentration on the nature

²¹The Against the Sophists as a whole but especially 3-5, 21; Antidosis 274 ff. Helen 1-14, cf. Xenophon, Memorabilia, I. 2. 7, vi. 13 and Helen 5-8, Plato Apology 20B. Isocrates accepts pay but only for the instruction concerning certain rhetorical skills and further makes no promises. He has the Socratic contempt for selling his thought to those who are not fit.

of political things implied in learning how to write a good political oration heightens a man's awareness of what is politically good. Any man who has considered in abstracto, for example, what kind of a man would make a good general would find it hard not to try to imitate his qualities if he himself were to become a general. And the things that he discovered were most important and were most likely to win him fame, would very likely become the objects of his ambition. Such is the value of discussing moral issues in generalized terms. The student's personal passions are removed from the consideration and it is only later, and perhaps in spite of himself, that the rule covers his own actions and may even contradict those momentarily forgotten passions. A man who has studied such things would have a certain sureness in his practical touch; he would act according to principles and his decisions would not be a result of mere chance.²²

In spite of what may be said to the contrary, in all of this, Isocrates is emphatically Socratic, in either the Platonic or Xenophonic versions, if there is really a difference between them. In the Republic Socrates carries on a discussion with a group of men concerning the nature of political things. Among these men are two young men with great political ambition and considerable doubt about the status of justice in the order of things--Glaucón and Adeimantus. Socrates does not tell them that justice is good or present a doctrine of justice. Nor does he discuss metaphysics with them. He invites them along on the adventure of constructing a good city, an eminently important and glorious task. By this close and abstract consideration of political things they

²²Antidosis 186-194, 196-214; Panathenaicus 32, Xenophon,

themselves are forced to accept the most rigorous standards of virtue and their moral horizon is distinctly broadened. They are not told; they see for themselves that no city worth founding could exist without justice. The very idea of the city, when developed in such a way, brings the student to certain conclusions about what he must do when he himself enters the political arena. This procedure of Socrates differs no whit from that which Isocrates describes as his own. They both employ that passion that the noblest young have to be the leaders in the assemblies and influence affairs to lead them to virtuous lives. The Republic would be, in Isocrates' sense, a politikos locos.

The same is true for the Xenophonic account of Socrates' way of teaching. The stories of his treatment of Euthydemus²³ and Glaucon as well as the first seven chapters of the third book of the Memorabilia should show this sufficiently. In fact, Socrates is always shown, by both Xenophon and Plato, discussing strictly political issues, forcing his interlocutors to examine what their own notions imply when developed. This is just what Isocrates says he does. And Xenophon tells us of Socrates exhorting one of his companions to the study of logoi as a study absolutely central to politics in terms strongly reminiscent of those of Isocrates.

Did you never reflect that all the best we learned according to custom--the learning, I mean, that teaches us how to live--we learned by means of words, and that every other good lesson

Memorabilia iii.9.1-3, iv.2.1ff. Both Isocrates and the Socrates of Xenophon state their educational systems very naively on the surface. Education is a necessary supplement to nature and experience; the educated man will have skill and dependability that the man who simply has luck will not have.

²³Memorabilia iv.2.

to be learned is learned by means of words; that the best teachers rely most on the spoken word and those with the deepest knowledge of the greatest subjects are the best talkers?²⁴

Words are not for the sake of speeches; clarity about the nature of actions can be gained only through the words that are used to justify them. That is why deliberative orations are so close to a philosophic study of politics; they contain the kernels of a deeper understanding of why men do things.

However strong this resemblance of intention may be, it is never considered convincing because it is assumed that Isocrates refused to accept the philosophical consequences of Socratic reasoning. He is understood to have remained for ever bound in the chains of the cave. He seem to say "no subtleties for me but what the city most needs" and hence to be an opponent of the Platonic Socrates and his refinements. Isocrates insists on a certain coarse effectiveness and it has been the fashion to see in his opposition to Plato a violent war of schools that rocked Athens throughout the fourth century. According to the taste of the interpreter, Isocrates or Plato is preferred, but the relation is conceived in the same way. Plato insisted on a metaphysical education and Isocrates on one that was literary. Isocrates never mentions Plato explicitly, but many passages are considered to be insinuations concerning him and his continuing assertion that the training for the political life is the most essential thing is taken as the blunt prise de partie against Plato. From Plato, according to this view, stemmed the West's philosophic interests and Isocrates was one of

²⁴Memorabilia iii. 3.11, cf. Nicocles 5-9; Antidosis 253-257; Panegyricus 48.

the fathers of a sort of good-natured humanism which involved a literary education. This would, it seems, leave Isocrates in the unfortunate position of not being able to justify his beliefs by any real principles, and even worse, of not even having wanted to.

In fact, this war of educations is not very solidly textually grounded and each of the passages cited to bolster it is generally drawn out of its context and admits of other more probable interpretations. It would be well to cite at large from one of the most important passages which supports the current view in order to attempt to show its ambiguities and its purpose.

I believe that those who have abilities for disputation (*ἐριστικοὶ λόγοι*) and those who are occupied with astronomy and geometry and such studies do no harm but rather help those who are about them--less than they promise but more than others think. For the majority of men assume that such studies are garrulousness and pettiness; none of them being useful for private life nor for public affairs, not even staying in the minds of those who learn them for any length of time because they do not attend us throughout life nor assist our actions but are in every way outside of what is necessary. I neither think these things, nor am I far from them; for I think that those who believe that this education is useless for practical affairs understand it rightly, but also I think that those who praise it speak the truth. I have made a statement that does not agree with itself because these studies have a nature not at all similar to the others which we are taught. The others naturally benefit us when we have mastered the discipline; but these would work no good for those who are immersed in them, unless they chose to live from that source, but they do benefit those who are learning them. For while occupying themselves with the prolixity and exactness of astronomy and geometry and being compelled to turn their minds to things that are hard to learn, they are at the same time becoming accustomed to speak and to work at things that are said and shown to them, and, not letting their minds wander, exercised and sharpened in these things they are more easily and more quickly able to grasp things more serious and more worthy of note. But I do not, however, think it necessary to entitle philosophy a study not beneficial in the present either for speaking or for action. But I would rather call such an occupation a gymnastic of the soul and a preparation for philosophy,

more manly than what the boys do in schools, but pretty much the same sort of thing. For the boys, when they have labored through grammar and music and the rest of education, have not yet made any progress towards speaking better or counselling about affairs; but they have gained more aptitude for being taught greater and more serious studies. I would, therefore, indeed urge the young men to occupy themselves with these studies for some time, but not, however, allow their natures to be withered away in them; nor ought they to run aground on the arguments of the old sophists--of whom one said that the sum of things that are is infinite; Empedocles, that there are four, with strife and love among them; Ion, not more than three; Alcmaeon, two only; Parmenides and Melissus one; and Gorgias, none at all. For I consider such wordiness similar to magicians' tricks which though they benefit no one yet gather crowds of the foolish. It is necessary for those who wish to accomplish something of value to banish from all their activities idle words and deeds having no bearing on their lives.²⁵

It must first be noted that this passage comes from the Antidosis, a defense by Isocrates, with his life assumed to be at stake, of philosophy. The accusation is that philosophy corrupts the youth and it is a frank imitation of Socrates' apology. Isocrates did not choose this situation as a simple stylistic device, it is a matter of the utmost importance; philosophy was truly hated and was in mortal danger. He is at one with Socrates in coming to the aid of the battered remnants of philosophic interest in the young. It is absurd to regard Isocrates as an over-sensitive old man who likes to dramatize his brooding suspicions that people do not like him. We, among whom these studies are so fully accepted, are inclined to forget how intense a struggle was needed to establish the place of the sciences in their infancy. It took heroic passion and hard labor to keep the embers alive after the death of Socrates by those men who chose to undertake the defense of philosophy. It is probably the most important, and perhaps least

²⁵Antidosis 261 ff.

noticed, factor for the interpretation of Isocrates that so much of his work takes on the character of apologetic. This is certainly the case of all the places where he speaks of his own philosophy.

The Socratic defense has by its nature two faces, the first looking toward the ancient philosophy, the second directed toward the city. The purpose of the latter is to prove to the citizens that philosophy is not a dangerous pursuit, that it does not pervert the loyalties of the young. It is highly probable that a study that is universal and cosmopolite would weaken the attachments of the student for the particular and the local. When Anaxagoras, who was watching the heavens, was asked whether he did not think he should serve his fatherland instead, he pointed up and said, "I am serving my fatherland." This was a justifiable suspicion on the part of the rulers and was accepted as such by the Socratics. A city has the right to demand that its young be educated to serve it. Belief in the laws and the gods of the city are the basis of such loyalty and it is at least questionable whether such belief does not undergo a supreme strain in a truly philosophic education. Hence both Plato and Xenophon take exceeding pains to prove that Socrates really educated gentlemen who served the city well. They attempt to make a political defense of philosophy, to prove that the city needs such study more than anything else. And this political statement of a philosophic point of view must needs lack perfect frankness because many of the studies pursued by philosophers are suspect and cannot be understood by the ordinary run of men, such as astronomical study of the heavenly divinities or

serious discussion of the justice of the laws of a particular city. Xenophon and Plato had to make ordinary men accept that which they cannot understand. To the extent that they make a political presentation of a non-political subject their writings are not philosophic but rhetorical.

The picture of Socrates presented by Aristophanes in the Clouds is just the one that even an intelligent Athenian might have. The pursuits of even the most respectable philosopher can appear such to a good solid citizen. Xenophon attempts to palliate this impression by showing throughout the Memorabilia that Socrates was only interested in the virtue of his disciples. Good men associated with Socrates. And the Socrates who in the Apology denies knowledge of the occult arts practiced by the physical philosophers, who says he devoted himself to a true understanding of man and styles himself the gadfly on the back of the people is with difficulty distinguishable from the Isocrates who tells the Athenians that they must most respect that citizen who criticizes them the most severely.

It is in such a context that the remarks of Isocrates cited above occur. The form of the oration, a defense before the Athenians, cannot be forgotten.²⁶ This is the essential background for their interpretation. Now it does not take too close a reading to observe that Isocrates here actually exhorts young men to the study of geometry, astronomy and dialectic. The argument constitutes

²⁶In connection with the question of Isocrates' methods, it is interesting to note that although he tells the court clerk to read the entire concluding passage of the To Nicocles (Antidosis 72), the clerk stops with paragraph 39, leaving out all the strong anti-democratic sentiments of paragraphs 39-54.

a defense of these activities for the young, a defense against the opinion of the majority of mankind. This is quite a lot in itself. Isocrates states that these are not bad or dangerous pursuits for the youth to follow. A far more effective defense of Isocrates it would have been if the prejudices of the audience had been played to and these studies were utterly rejected. Isocrates actually opens a door that the Athenians wished to close. Isocrates reserves a place in the city for the pale young men who hang about in the agora carrying on captious disputations.

As a further example of the possibilities of interpretation which the above quoted passage affords, it may well be compared to a similar statement, ascribed to Socrates by Xenophon:

Nor did he discuss speculation about the nature of the whole, as did most others; how what is called Cosmos by the sophists came to be and by what necessities each heavenly thing operates; but he argued that such speculation is folly. . . . for of those who worry about the nature of the whole it seems to some that what is is one; to others that the sun is infinite; for some everything is always moving, for others nothing is ever moved; for some everything comes to be and passes away, for others nothing ever comes to be or perishes. He also advanced these considerations; just as those who study human things think that they will, when they have learned, do something for themselves and for whomsoever they wish; do those who investigate the divine things believe that, when they have come to know through what forces each thing comes to be, they will be able to make winds, rains, seasons and whatever else they require, or is it sufficient for them only to know from what each of such things come to be.²⁷

Xenophon here defends Socrates against the charge that he introduced new gods into the city. The passage has the purpose of showing that Socrates was not a corrupter of the youth by his leading them to physical speculations. In a court room it would be taken

²⁷Memorabilia i 1 11-15.

as a flat denial of the charges. But the passage is obviously susceptible of more subtle explanations. The simple answer of a theoretical man to the question with which the quotation ends would be that knowledge is quite sufficient. And if the list of mad theories is examined, it is evident that all the alternatives are absurd. There is more than one element and there are fewer than an infinite number. There are other alternatives than those expressed here, and it must be wondered whether the answers listed were not intentionally impossible--whether Xenophon does not implicitly say that others might be acceptable.

Now the same possibilities can be seen in Isocrates' statement. He too is making a defense and is charged with corrupting the youth. There is a great similarity between Xenophon's list and that of Isocrates. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that Isocrates tells the young only to reject the old sophists. It is at this point that enters into view the other side of the Socratic defense, that which protects civil society from the attacks of the pre-Socratics. Although the Socratic criticism of natural speculation has a strongly rhetorical character because it must convince suspicious non-philosophers that philosophy properly understood is innocuous, it has also a more subtle and serious inner content which views a philosophic audience. The great philosophers of nature who lived in the sixth and fifth centuries passed by civil society without a fare-thee-well and discussed the origins of things and the structure of the cosmos. This study drove them further and further away from the understanding of political things and they were unable to deal with the most common phenomena

of every day life. Let the doubter try to reconstruct from the atoms of Democritus a convincing account of moral nobility. Such a view destroys the ordinary common sense understanding of things and at the same time ends up with conclusions that are far from convincing as evidenced by the diversity of positions which were current and formally contradicted one another. These thinkers had analyzed the universe into its smallest denominators but had been unable to reconstruct from them the world we know. The cosmos found itself in the unfortunate position of Humpty-Dumpty²⁸ and the men who accomplished this great work were akin to madmen. They had not held tightly enough to the ordinary certain experiences of every day life and had led themselves into a void from which there was no return.

Socrates with his "second sailing" attempted to find a new way to authentic knowledge of things which preserved the intent of earlier thought in avoiding its follies.²⁹ If men look the sun in the face they are blinded and can see nothing at all ; if they look at the reflections of things they are more apt to see their real characters; one must clarify the natures of the things of which one can have solid knowledge. This means a return to the dimensions of things as they appear to common sense; otherwise the complexity of the things as they actually are is lost. Consequently, the neglected political things gain a privileged position in

²⁸Humpty-Dumpty sat on a wall
 Humpty-Dumpty had a great fall
 Not all the king's horses nor all the king's men
 Could put Humpty back together again.

²⁹Phaedo 95e ff.

this new approach. They are the things which are closest to man and occupy him most intensely. By trying to work through all the byways of men's notions of the just, one can get a clearer idea of what sort of a world we live in than by going directly to a discussion of the atoms.³⁰ Men have a more definite experience with acts of justice and injustice than they do of the movements of the atoms. The phenomena must be "saved" in order to have any real understanding of things. All the exquisite reasonings in the world cannot help us if they cannot answer Socrates' homely questions: what is virtue? what is the just? what is beneficial?

A view of the world which does not care about and has no place for the moral distinctions which are so difficult but so important for human life is an essentially perverted one. And even if it were true that such distinctions were built on sand, their destruction would be that of society itself, an intolerable consequence. Socrates established himself as the philosophic defender of ordinary virtue, the science of simple souls.³¹ "From Socrates' copious discussions emerged a group of most learned men who, it is said, first discovered philosophy--not that philosophy about nature, which was older, but that which discusses good and bad, concerning the life of man and his habits."³² No matter how far into natural speculation the Socratic method might lead it must always pass by way of the understanding of gentlemen and that most evident foreground will be preserved. The majority of men will have to live

³⁰Memorabilia i 1 11-16.

³¹Rousseau, Discours sur les Arts et Sciences.

³²Brutus 31.

in that world and the ascent must begin from them. Thus the commencement of Socratic philosophy always looks like a rejection of natural philosophy if one were to read Socrates' story of his experiences with the pre-Socratics in the Phaedo without going beyond the point where Socrates tells of his second sailing it would give exactly the same impression as the quoted passages from Isocrates and Xenophon--that cosmological speculation is absurd. We know, however, that Socrates did carry on such speculation; but he had first to set the stage for his new endeavour and lead men back to its beginnings in political life.

Isocrates himself goes no further than this. He insists that politics must be taken very seriously and that any studies which claim to make men virtuous and whose students are unable to deal with the most ordinary affairs must be somehow deficient. This does not mean to say that a man who could simply handle affairs would be enough; but if he is rendered incapable of doing that by philosophy, then philosophy has little to do with human life and deserves to be hated and feared. As can be readily seen, most of the exact arts and sciences have had to surrender their real interest in order to attain their exactness. Isocrates tells us that this exactness has been obtained by abstracting from the true complexity of things. Contrary to general opinion, he does not say that opinion is the only thing to which man is capable of attaining; he only denies that in political things there can be absolute certainty about the future, and that statesmanship demands a certain amount of guesswork and hope. There is too much change in this world to be sure of the success of any policy; he would prefer

to have a tried and true statesman at the helm rather than a statistician. His is a plea for prudence in the shadowy world of practice. This does not imply that there are no certain principles about the ends of politics nor that there are no areas in which man can acquire solid knowledge. And in this regard he differs in no wise from Plato, Xenophon, and Aristotle; he is rather criticizing sophists who claim they can teach all that is necessary to know.³³ He mentions men like Protagoras and Gorgias whom Plato

³³Antidosis 271, 184; Panathenaicus 28-30; Helen 5. These are the passages on which are based the interpretations of Isocrates as a defender of opinion against science. Their sense is best explained by Against the Sophists 2, where Isocrates explains that men cannot foresee the future and are hence always in doubt. It seems that this is rather flimsy evidence for the support of a view that he thereby rejected the whole dimension of science. He admits the existence of sciences like geometry and astronomy; Isocrates only says that these are not sufficient for the guidance of political life; he makes a distinction between theory and practice and indicates that practice is not reducible to theory as some sophists thought. Statesmanship has a role that cannot be substituted for by any abstract teaching. Action is based upon expectations and hopes; it is thus always based upon $\delta\omicron\varsigma\alpha$. This does not differ in essence from the sense of the Aristotelian distinction between practice and theory. The Aristotelian terminology avoids the use of the term $\delta\omicron\varsigma\alpha$ but the meaning is the same: political wisdom is not a theoretical science. There is no direct relation between theoretical science and action (Ethics vi 7 7). That Isocrates lays a peculiar emphasis on the sphere of $\delta\omicron\varsigma\alpha$ is irrelevant here; he is in accord with Plato, Aristotle and Xenophon that the political is in the last resort based on (cf. Memorabilia I i 5-8).

Although this statement may be disputed so far as Plato is concerned, it is likely that in those passages where he seems to insist that there is an exact science of politics, he is actually, as is his wont, examining things in the light of a perfection unattainable in human affairs. At the end of the Phaedrus, Socrates indicates that the actualization of wisdom is the province of the gods alone, and that for men there can be only the eternal, unfulfilled quest (Phaedrus 278d). The Statesman as a whole, and especially the myth, tend to prove that only under the rule of god could there be real science. In the myth, the stranger says that all things with which matter is admixed are changeable. And, at 301, it is pointed out that men in actuality are forced to use laws, an inexact imitation of perfection, and that this seems

also took the trouble to refute. Isocrates' criticisms of the arts and sciences in the Panathenaicus recall Socrates' visits to various men who thought they knew the most important things but really knew nothing or very little.

Isocrates does not indicate that it is easy to reach that comprehension of the place of each thing in the whole that his developed conception of gentlemanliness implies, that understanding "which has distinguished between the misfortunes that are due to ignorance and those which spring from necessity, and has taught us to guard against the former and to bear the latter nobly."³⁴ To be able to act as the educated man acts could require a complete wisdom about the nature of things, a knowledge of the particular arts as well as of their position in the totality of things.³⁵

the necessary situation of mankind. The Laws stands in testimony to this and the training there is of men with right opinions. In the Euthyphro 7, Socrates hints that disagreements about the just and the unjust are natural among men. Finally, the upshot of the Alcibiades I is that Socrates tells Alcibiades that the true way to be a politician is to remove himself entirely from politics and pursue wisdom. In a sense, Alcibiades is seeking the science of politics and that is his goal, but if he is true to his purpose he will never return to the government of states. So Plato is speaking more of philosophy than politics in such instances where he speaks of an exact science; he leaves aside the discussion of real government, which is necessary, but will always be dominated by troubles and opinions.

Isocrates' emphasis on $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$ is a result of his return to politics and his assurance that $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$ must be taken seriously; the important question is not why Isocrates preferred $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$ but why politics are important for him as opposed to the pretensions of science. On the relation of politics and $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$ the classical authors are in general accord. It is in fact probable that a Socratic would give a higher status to $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$ than the proponent of any other system, because for him $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$ would be the reflection of ultimate truths whereas for a non-Socratic it would be vain and empty. As soon as one has found that the city has a natural dignity it follows immediately that $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$, on which it is largely founded, has also a higher dignity. A pre-Socratic who rejects the city for the sake of science holds $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$ in correspondingly low esteem.

³⁴Panegyricus 47

³⁵Xenophon who says that Socrates' interest was in helping

Isocrates never tells us a word about what goes on in his school; he refutes others positions and tells his prospective students that they must study logoi and that this study is the most necessary for leading lives as good citizens. But the real curriculum and interior mechanics of his program are always cautiously passed over; the only speech in which he promises such a revelation suspiciously enough lacks this all important ending in all our extant manuscripts.³⁶ Now, he says about astronomy and geometry in our passage ". . . these things will do no good for those who are well versed in them, unless they choose to live from that source." That is indeed a powerful qualifier. It can be profitably compared with another passage in the Memorabilia:

He rejected learning geometry as far as the more difficult figures. For what ever benefit these were for, he said he could not see. And yet he was not unexperienced in them. But he said that they are enough of themselves to waste a life on and prevent many other beneficial activities.

And about astronomy:

In this too he could see no benefit, and yet he was not untutored in it. But he said that it is enough of itself to waste a life on and prevent many other beneficial activities.³⁷

The similarity of these passages is so striking that they can hardly be passed over without reflection.

Although Isocrates is frequently critical of disputatious

men to be gentlemen defines gentlemen in such a way that to be one a man would have to be a philosopher in the fullest Platonic sense: the gentleman is a man who can answer the question τι ἐστὶν? (Memorabilia i. 6.16; cf. iii. 9. 1-5). This is essentially the point of Isocrates' discussion of the well educated man (Panathenaiscus 30-32).

³⁶Against the Sophists

³⁷Memorabilia iv. 7. 2-5.

dialogues (*ἐριστικός λόγος*) this criticism is again not contradictory to the Socratic spirit as a consideration of the Euthydemus of Plato will show. And when writing to Nicocles, he says in the course of his instruction:

Those who are engaged in philosophy dispute about the discipline of the soul--some say that it is through disputation (*ἐριστικός λόγος*), others through political discourse (*πολιτικός λόγος*), and other through other means that those who associate with them will be more intelligent. Yet all agree that it is necessary that the nobly educated appear from each of them able to give counsel.³⁸

Isocrates here admits that possibly his capacity to advise is neutral to the argument about the best way to pursue knowledge.

Politikoi logoi may be the source of his capacity; then again, they may not be. Isocrates says in his letter to the young Alexander:

As to philosophies you do not reject the one having to do with disputation (*περὶ τῆς ἐριδος*), but hold that it is profitable in private discussions, you regard it nevertheless as unsuitable for either those who are leaders of the people or for monarchs; for it is not expedient nor fitting for those who regard themselves as superior to others to dispute with their fellow citizens or suffer others to contradict them.³⁹

Isocrates is neither leader of the people nor monarch. He is the epitome of a private man. Does he carry on dialectical investigation? He mentions discussions with students frequently and we have one complete debate recorded in a form not unrelated to that of the dialogue. The student says this was the sort of thing that they had learned in the school and further says that Isocrates' speeches are meant to suscite dialectic about the nature of man and things (*περὶ δὲ φύσεως ἀνθρώπων διαλεγόμενων καὶ πραγμάτων*).

³⁸To Nicocles 51.

³⁹Letter v. 3.

The result of the discussion is that the student learned "to know himself."⁴⁰

When taken in a non-historical vacuum many passages of Isocrates may seem to contradict many passages of Plato. But if one takes a truly historical approach by trying to discover what the real issues at stake were and articulating their responses to them, an amazing community of opinion is to be found. The dual character of the Socratic defense--the need for the defense of philosophy against the city and the protection of the city against philosophy--makes up the core of the group of serious questions which faced philosophers after the death of Socrates. The responses to both questions by Isocrates and Plato are the same. The city must be shown that philosophy produces good citizens and philosophy must find a way to comprehend the morality of the city. The fact that Isocrates did not write a complete system or did not formally raise all the questions does not prove that he could not have done so if he had wished. He had, as we shall see, many reserves about writing. Admittedly all that has been shown thus far does not prove that Isocrates shared all the Socratic beliefs; it is sufficient to say that he never disagrees with what we know of those beliefs. And the fact that he chose to make a defense of philosophy in the Socratic spirit reveals how profound the influence of Socrates was on him. Even the choice of rhetoric as his way of expressing himself becomes clearer in this light. What was most needful during his time was persuasion about philosophy and rhetoric is the public

⁴⁰Panathenaicus 236, 240, 230.

tool of persuasion as the Apology shows. The exact relation between Socrates and Isocrates will probably never be known; the only direct hint we have is recorded by Plato thus:

Phaedrus: The fair Isocrates, what will you tell him, Socrates? What shall we say he is?

Socrates: He is young yet, Phaedrus. However, what I prophesy for him, I am willing to tell.

Phaedrus: What?

Socrates: I think he has a nature better than that of the speeches of Lysias, and further he is tempered with a nobler character; so that it would not at all be surprising if, as he advances in age, he should excel so much in his chosen art of speeches that he make all who have ever treated of that subject seem like children. And, further, I should not be surprised if these things do not satisfy him and a more divine urge leads him to something greater. My friend, there is a certain philosophy naturally in that man's intellect. This then is the message from the gods I bear to my love Isocrates.

Cicero quotes this passage in the Orator and comments: "As for me, those who do not esteem Isocrates must let me err with Socrates and Plato."⁴¹

B

A rhetorical form of expression requires its own special mode of interpretation. A speech cannot be read as a treatise is read. When a man writes a treatise he addresses it directly to the reader whoever he may be and he strives for the utmost clarity in his expression; the reader must only pay attention to his author's line of argument; the personal situation of the author need not ordinarily be considered and his style is of importance only in relation to the end of clarity. With a speech, however, the direct relation between reader and written work is broken and the reader is now at the second remove; the writer no longer is addressing him

⁴¹Phaedrus 278e-279b; Cicero, Orator 42.

but an audience of which he is not a part. In the Areopagiticus, we watch Isocrates speaking to the Athenians concerning a very special problem which does not particularly concern us; we are very distant spectators who must, in order to understand, disentangle the complicated interactions of the speaker with his audience. The arguments used are likely to fit the nature of the situation and the audience; in a different situation and with a different audience the arguments might very well differ entirely, although the same final effect was intended. A Megarian will be moved to colonize a new land by hopes of gain, a Spartan because it offers him the occasion to demonstrate his courage, and an Athenian by promises of glory. The final effect is the same, but, because of the difference of natures, the tools of persuasion must vary radically. A man who intends to persuade is not so interested in setting down the unvarnished truth to be understood by those who are competent as to cause as many men as possible to act as though they knew the truth whether this is the case or not. The orator's skill consists in knowing men's natures well enough to know what is persuasive to each type. Perfectly reasonable arguments may shock the tastes of some people and other, less reasonable arguments, must be found to take their places.

To understand such a writing, it is not helpful to extract phrases that seem to state things directly; one must rather refer to the total effect of the speech in its relation to the audience. This is somewhat similar to the way in which a drama must be read. It is a crude error to interpret one character's statements as the voice of the author unless the author explicitly identifies himself

with him. Each speech must be seen in the light of the character who says it and the people addressed by it. The reader must have a constant awareness that it is a drama and that the context is of the essence. And with the orations of Isocrates the same is the case. He changes his role very often indeed and concentrates on saying the right thing at the right time in the right way. It is a continuing source of error to regard him as a simple, clear writer, and throughout this study examples of his subtlety and complexity have demonstrated this proposition. The problem is to discover exactly how Isocrates intended that his works should be read; if his principles of writing can be found, the meaning of the more difficult passages can be solidly established and, further, the nature of Isocratic rhetoric can be penetrated as well as the fundamental reasons for his choice of rhetoric as the central discipline. It is only by this route that one can become completely initiated into the mysteries of Isocrates.

It was observed in the discussion of pan-Hellenism that there are, roughly speaking, two main sorts of Isocratic orations--those that give good, serious practical advice and oppose themselves to the ordinary passions and those that praise and promise fulfillment to the passions. The former are written coldly and simply with almost no recourse to myth; they are not persuasive as such; they would be beneficial if taken seriously but they are above all critical. The second class are warm and hopeful; they promise all and they are rhetorical displays--epideictic--in the sense that all the beguiling devices of skilful rhetoric are showed off in them. And, co-ordinate with this difference, Isocrates'

thought about writing itself differs according to the sort of speech. When he is advising, he inclines to contempt for it. It is a much higher thing to lead men to good habits than to teach them to write. Writing is an inadequate substitute for conversation. In very Platonic fashion he complains of the written word's incapacity to defend itself. At all events, writing is a very poor substitute for personal relationship; it is conceived of as simply serving to convey a message which might be passed on in other ways; it is a purely utilitarian instrument. On the other hand, the epideictic speeches all begin with praises of rhetoric and discussions of writing. The man who can write seems to be endowed with the most important qualities and a great speech is a work of very great value. This is another element in the tension between the speeches that are pan-Hellenic and those that are not--the opposition between the naked truth and pretty speeches. Isocrates seems to take a very equivocal attitude before this choice. The preference for the truth is easily comprehensible, but we must see the movement of Isocrates' thought in his insistence on style--that is, we must watch the geneological development of his particular style and its reasons. It must be remembered throughout this discussion that Isocrates never moves from the position that "truth" is the most important thing and that rhetoric is in its service, that truth must be understood in the first place. He never rejects this fundamental prejudice in its favor which separates him from the other rhetoricians. What must be investigated is his inclination for praiseworthy writing which seems a bit suspicious in a man who claims to value truth above all.

As was seen in the discussion of pan-Hellenism, the truth of the speeches which give counsel gives them as such a higher political status; a healthy community would readily accept the advice contained in the Areopagiticus and a speaker of rude public virtue would suffice. Stylish rhetoric is indicative of a state of society in which men are unwilling to accept the evident common good and are trying to cheat one another; subtle persuasion is not needed where men are unified and friendly. However in most real cases, men are not so disposed and the simple manner of speaking is helpless.

It was clear to me before, that although everyone thinks that both the prose and the poetry which give counsel are the most useful, they don't listen to it with the greatest pleasure, but feel about it just what they feel about those who admonish them. They praise such men, but prefer to associate with those who will err with them than those who turn them away from error. One can prove this from the poetry of Hesiod, Theognis, and Phocylides. They say that these men have proved the best counselors for the life of man; but those who say these things choose to spend their time with the follies of one another than with the precepts of these men. Moreover, if someone should select from the leading poets what are called maxims, those about which they were most serious, the majority would be similarly disposed towards them. For they would listen to the most inconsequential comedy more gladly than to such artfully contrived productions.

But what need have I to waste time enumerating instances, for if we should be willing to consider the natures of men, we would find the majority of them taking pleasure not in the healthiest of foods, nor the noblest of practices, nor in the best of affairs, nor in the most useful of animals; but in every way they have pleasures contrary to what is beneficial, and those who do something of what they ought appear to them to be austere and lovers of toil. So, how could anyone advise, or teach, or say anything useful, and yet please such people; in addition to what has been said they envy those who are intelligent, and they consider sincere those who are stupid, and they so fly from the truth of things that they do not even know their own affairs. . . .⁴²

⁴²To Nicocles 456.

Men do not like to be criticized; and the more accurate the criticism, the greater the resentment evoked. Both Isocrates and philosophy were hated at Athens. Words as words can effect nothing when men will not listen. This situation is so obvious that the man who lays down precepts directly looks foolish, laying himself open to the charge of naivete. If somebody wants to get something done he must go to someone who possesses arms and money, "the only things which by nature persuade and compel." If Isocrates' end were solely the accomplishment of a definite, practically realizable object, this is what he would have done. But Isocrates was training men for virtue and if he wanted to be something more than flatterer he had to know how to deal with even the tyrant. And there are always those in the democracies who can be saved and be turned to more thoughtful lives, if the message can be delivered to them.

Just as was the case with pan-Hellenism, the corruption of the political order is again the occasion for the development of the arts. It was seen there that the early times had lived in the shelter of customs and manners that helped men to avoid many thorny problems that face them in times of crisis. These moral crises, though thoroughly undesirable in themselves, give rise to discussion and investigation of the sort that may permit a far profounder understanding of things than that contained in the laws of a good city, or, to put it otherwise, perhaps that city was not as good as it seemed to those living in it and it may have lacked elements of humanity that were needed to perfect it. It is such a crisis that is at the root of the pan-Hellenism and its resolution pre-supposed the development of philosophy and a broader understanding

of human nature which in its turn could offer the means for constituting a civil society more perfect than had ever before been known. Starting with a situation and passions that are in themselves low, new potentialities are revealed. The problem of speaking in such cases produces the art of persuasion. The beauties of the Panegyricus are only a result of the defective situation in which men will not accept the truths of the Peace. The difficulty in getting the simplest truths to be believed forces one to deeper truths about the nature of man, and the need to manipulate the passions produces an awareness of the relation between thought and speech. And it is thus that Isocrates admires the understanding contained in the art of poetry; it can move men in a way the sermons never can.

This then is evident, that those who wish to do or write anything pleasing to the many must not use those arguments that are the most beneficial but those that are the most fabulous. For when they hear such things and when they view the games and contests they take pleasure. On this account we may well admire the poetry of Homer and those who discovered tragedy, because they discerned the nature of man and applied both these forms to poetry. For Homer told stories of the contests and the wars of the demi-gods, and the tragedians embodied the stories in games and actions, so that they are not only heard but can also be seen. In the face of such examples, it is obvious to those who are eager to lead the souls (ψυχὰς ἡγεῖν) of their audience, that they must leave off of admonishing and counseling, and must say such things in which they see the mobs taking the most pleasure.⁴³

Poets are able to please men and avoid their hatred. They have an insight into men's characters and can find the things that are most likely to touch them. And any persuasive rhetoric must partake of this power if it is to avoid the envy of the mob.⁴⁴ But Isocrates

⁴³To Nicocles 456.

⁴⁴Helen 56.

does not take a purely aesthetic view of the written word. Simple beauty or attractiveness is not enough to justify a work; it must also be based upon some correct appreciation of things. An orientation toward the pleasure of the audience would soon destroy real beauty; a work that was appealing to a fool or a scoundrel would appear ugly to a wise or virtuous man. And poetry, with all of its charms, is not sufficiently interested in the truth or depth of its subjects. Its devices tend to be empty tricks that inspire contempt in a serious man.

Although they may be base in speech and ideas, nevertheless the poets lead the souls of those who listen by their very rhythms and harmonies. The power of poetry can be recognized from this fact: if the words and thoughts of the poems in best repute were left intact, but the metre were done away with, they would appear to be far inferior to the opinion we have of them as they are.⁴⁵

Poetry is essentially defective in so far as it is not based upon an appropriate view of things. It can be misleading and corrupting, causing men to take pleasure in base or useless things. This can be well seen from the tacit competition that Isocrates carries on with Homer. Homer is the great teacher of Greece and any new approach to the education of men must start with a critique of that divine educator. Isocrates hence preserves a great reticence in regard to praising him. The real value of his poems, according to Isocrates, is that in reading them the young will be incited to virtue through emulation of his heroes.⁴⁶ However, his heroes may have never existed and he praised them in a way that gives his readers the impression that he was inclined to hyperbole.⁴⁷

⁴⁵Evagoras 11.

⁴⁶Panegyricus 159.

⁴⁷Evagoras 6, Panegyricus 168-169, Philip 142-143.

But far more important than this is the fact that his heroes are not authentic heroes. Homer's heroes are courageous men but courage is the lowest of virtues. Isocrates demonstrates this by his praise of Agamemnon, in direct contradiction to Homer, who was the true leader of the expedition. Agamemnon excelled because of his prudent; he knew what the interests of Greece were and recognized that the war was not for the sake of Helen, as is said in Homer's word, but for the whole of Greece as represented in Agamemnon's deed.⁴⁸ It was not a base cause such as jealousy over a woman that was responsible for Troy but the superiority of civilization over barbarism; Agamemnon was the only one who understood this.

Isocrates thus defends Agamemnon against the Homeric preference for Achilles. Homer did not recognize a true hero. The underlying intent of this criticism is to demonstrate the superiority of the soul in human affairs and to denigrate the Achillean courage which is based on the body. Isocrates always re-interprets the great heroes of antiquity, like Theseus and Heracles, who were known for courage in showing that their courage was subordinate to their wisdom.⁴⁹ The new education of Isocrates puts an emphasis on philosophy that could never exist in a study based on Homer. He is introducing a new view of things that must find new heroes to represent it. The strong, manly virtues of war are to be replaced by the guiding lights of wisdom which are alone capable of illuminating

⁴⁸Panathenaicus 74 ff.

⁴⁹Philip 109-110, Panathenaicus 126-129 (cf. Helen 18-38 and the discussion below of the meaning of Theseus' passion for beauty.)

and rendering intelligible those more ancient virtues.

In the same line of reasoning is Isocrates' depreciation of the Trojan war. Homer's war was considered the greatest of all wars, the one which was most revealing about the nature of man, in which the greatest potentialities were brought to bear, in which the difference between Greek and Barbarian was most clearly shown. In order that a man's book about another war be taken seriously, in order that he establish himself as the teacher of the Greeks his claims must be based on greater events and stronger heroes. Herodotus and Thucydides were very explicit in their efforts to prove that their wars were greater wars than the Trojan war; their wars were more justly culminations of history and their books could claim to contain a teaching founded on a richer understanding of things. Isocrates follows this tradition in constantly minimizing the Trojan war and rarely mentioning it.⁵⁰ He pretends to be the representative of wars that surpass the Trojan war and men who want a glory greater than that of Achilles must follow him rather than Homer. He can only free men from Homer's influence by creating benefits greater than those that the Trojan heroes gained. He does this in two ways. First, as he does so frequently, he chooses the most ancient events as his standards. In this way he stands as a defender of the traditional for those who identify the good with the traditional and would be disturbed by a new teaching. In this perspective, Heracles and Theseus, who are older than the Trojan heroes,

⁵⁰ Philip 112, Panegyricus 83, Evagoras 65 (Isocrates does not evidently really think that Evagoras was greater than the Trojan heroes. But whenever he wants to make a man great it is the Homeric heroes he chooses to depreciate in his favor.)

become the great representatives of the Greek struggles with the Barbarians. Second, and more revolutionary, is Isocrates' own war against the Barbarians which would be the greatest war that could ever be and could provide glory never to be dimmed by other exploits.⁵¹ This is the authentically Isocratic war and it breaks radically with the tradition insofar as Homer, Herodotus, and Thucydides wrote about wars that had already taken place; they drew their wisdom from what was. Isocrates, on the other hand, proposes a war; its greatness is a result of Isocrates' wisdom and the logos comes before the ergon. Isocrates' teaching is thus very new and it implies that politics presupposes philosophy to an extent that the pre-Socratics could not have imagined. He shows that greatness does not depend on historical circumstance but on man as man.

In the Evagoras, Isocrates establishes a poetry that combines the persuasiveness of the old poetry with his understanding of the truth. He says that the admiration for the great poets of the past and their representations of the heroes has had two pernicious effects. Men have no hope of being praised because all the best is in the past and they are unable to win their just share of glory no matter how good they may be. Thus the motivation for great political deeds is subverted. Isocrates promises to rectify this situation by showing that he can write eulogies capable of producing great repute among men if those who desire fame were only to follow the standards he sets. He can thus resuscitate the emulation of the disheartened. And, secondly, the admiration of the old poems did not encourage the progress of the arts. The arts

⁵¹Panathenaicus 189ff, Panegyricus 66 ff, Philip 140 ff, Panegyricus 182 ff.

demand constant innovation. This is perhaps Isocrates' strongest single statement in favor of progress and contrasts strongly with his ordinary cautious conservatism.⁵²

The Evagoras is such a skilled praise demonstrating Isocrates' powers. The truth of the statements about Evagoras are of evidently little import; he makes a silk purse out of a sow's ear. The real truth is that Evagoras would have had to have been such a man to be praiseworthy. No matter what the actual facts of Evagoras' life were, it is healthier for the young to read of the glorious Evagoras presented by Isocrates. Because Isocrates is assured of the value of the virtues before he begins, the historical account is of little importance. Isocrates' great skill is evidenced by the fact that he can make a man famous whose deeds themselves do not merit fame. He imitates Homer in this. But his praise has the two advantages that it is but a promise of further praises that can be won by the meritorious and that the elements which constitute the praiseworthy for him are truer than those of Homer. His virtues are more those of the soul. And finally, the net result of such a rhetorical power is not only that some men will become more virtuous in their political acts but that some will also read and ponder the work and be attracted to philosophy.

Isocrates' poetry attempts to gain that dominion over men's souls that the Iliad had gained; this power rests on a manipulation of the passions and presents men with a view of things that becomes so much a part of them that they cannot escape it; it represents to the half-wise mind all that superstition does to the primitive. It

⁵² Evagoras 5 ff.

It is not itself the whole truth; it is partial truth adorned with all the trappings that the pleasures and the passion for repute demand. The pan-Hellenism is the most perfect example of this technique; men act for the preservation of Hellenism for reasons which range from the vain desire to watch a parade to the mad one of becoming a god; the ensemble is orchestrated by the vision of the rhetorician who knows how to put each thing in its proper place. It is the renaissance of the Homeric epic in the framework of a philosophic understanding. Isocrates sums up all the foregoing in a most interesting passage about the transcendently good Timotheus:

Most of you are, I suppose, astonished at what I am saying, and think that in praising him I am condemning Athens, since he, after having captured so many cities and having never lost a single one, was tried for treason and again when he submitted his reports, and Iphicrates took upon himself the responsibility for the conduct of the campaign and Menestheus accounted for the moneys expended upon it, they, on the one hand, were acquitted, while Timotheus was fined a larger sum than anyone in the past had ever been condemned to pay. The fact is, however, that I desire to stand up for Athens also. It is true that if you consider the actions of the city by the standard of pure justice, no one of you can avoid the conclusion that her treatment of Timotheus was cruel and abominable; but if you make allowance for the ignorance which possesses all mankind, for the feelings of envy that are aroused in us, and, furthermore, for the confusion and turmoil in which we live, you will find that nothing of what has been done has come about without a reason nor does the cause lie outside of human nature, but that Timotheus, also, has been responsible in some degree for the mistaken judgements passed upon him. For while he was no anti-democrat nor a misanthrope, nor arrogant, nor possessed of any such defect of character, yet because of his greatness of soul (*μεγαλοφροσύνη*)--an advantage to office of general but out of place in dealing with men from day to day--everyone attributed to him the faults which I have named; for he was by nature as inept in courting the favour of men as he was gifted in handling affairs.

Indeed he has often been advised by me, among others, that while men who are in political life and desire to be in favour must adopt the principle of doing what is most serviceable and noble and of saying what is most true and just, yet they must at the same time not neglect to study and consider well

how in everything they say and do they may convince the people of their graciousness and human sympathy; since those who are careless of these matters are thought by their fellow-citizens to be disagreeable and offensive. "You observe," I would say to him, "the nature of the multitude, how susceptible they are to flattery; that they like those who cultivate their favour better than those who seek their good; and that they prefer those who cheat them with beaming smiles and brotherly love to those who serve them with dignity and reserve. You have paid no attention to these things, but are of the opinion that if you attend honestly to your enterprises abroad, the people at home also will think well of you. But this is not the case, and the very contrary is wont to happen. For if you please the people in Athens, no matter what you do they will not judge your conduct by the facts but will construe it in a light favourable to you; and if you make mistakes, they will overlook them, while if you succeed, they will exalt your success to the high heaven. For good will has this effect upon all men.

"But you, while seeking by every means in your power to win for Athens the good will of the rest of the Hellenes, because you recognize its great advantages, nevertheless you do not consider that there is a need to secure for yourself the good will of Athens; nay, you who have benefited the city in ways beyond calculation are less esteemed than those who have done nothing of note.

And you could expect nothing else; for such men cultivate the public orators and the speakers who are effective in private gatherings and who profess to be authorities on every subject, while you not only neglect to do this, but actually make an open breach between yourself and the orators who are from time to time the most influential.

And yet I wonder if you realized how many men have either come to grief or failed of honour because of the misrepresentations of these orators; how many in the generations that are past have left no name, although they were far better and worthier men than those who are celebrated in song and on the tragic stage. But the latter, you see, found their poets and historians, while the others secured no one to hymn their praises. Therefore, if you will only heed me and be sensible, you will not despise these men whom the multitude are wont to believe, not only with reference to each one of their fellow-citizens, but also with reference to the affairs of the whole state, but you will in some measure show attention and pay court to them in order that you may be held in honour both because of your own deeds and because of their words."

When I would speak to him in this wise, he would admit that I was right, but he could not change his nature. He was a gentleman, a credit to Athens and Greece, but he could not lower himself to the level of people who are intolerant of

their natural superiors. So it was that the orators occupied themselves with inventing many false charges against him, and the multitude with drinking them in.⁵³

Whether one takes this to be a description of Isocrates' own situation as well as that of Timotheus or not, it is clear that the conflict between greatness and the vulgarizing effects of civil society is a problem that goes far beyond the single persecution of Timotheus and bears on the nature of political things. Timotheus was a very great man who was the cause of the greatest goods to the Athenians, but for all his benefactions was hated and condemned. Nor was this an accident but was a result of human nature itself. He was a proud man and the common run of men distrust this sort of individual; he is too unlike them and they are afraid he is not really devoted to their interests. Just as civil society cannot assimilate the lowest levels of human nature, it has difficulty finding a place for the highest types, living in common requires a certain equality and sharing of pleasures and pains. A man like Timotheus, by nature, appears to dislike the objects of common pleasure and to have contempt for the people. He, with noble simplicity, thought that if he devoted himself to the most important external affairs and excelled therein, he would be naturally loved, whereas all the contrary was true. One must know how to pay court to the people or all the virtue in the world will be nugatory. The key to political success is reputation and a false lover of the people is more likely to be able to implement his policies than a Timotheus. The goodwill of the citizens turns the true character of men's deeds upside down. Therefore the successful political man

⁵³Antidosis 129-138.

must make himself appear to be one of the people; he must not frighten them. There are only two ways to do this--he must either actually pare himself down to the level of the mean or he must find techniques which, while preserving his integrity, make him seem to be a whole-hearted commoner.

What is needed then is an art of gentle deception which permits a man to pursue his true nature while appearing to be satisfying his whole public, a bridge between the highest good and the qualified or moderated good of public life. And it is the orators and the poets who are the possessors of this precious craft; they hold the public ear and can make who they will loved or famous. They themselves are corrupted and accept the vulgar standards; pleasure is their goal. But those sung by them, good or bad, are those who are famous and loved. Isocrates always told Timotheus that he must cultivate these people and his tragedy was a result of his neglect. And it was his fault that he did not acquire this necessary accessory to political prudence. Isocrates tells us in this passage how aware he was of the need for flattery in political life and the importance of the making of words for even the most practical of lives. He was not ignorant after the fashion of Timotheus. It is in this way that we can understand Isocrates' own poetry or rhetoric, and it is easy to see why he put so much emphasis on the dimension of reputation. It does not mean that writing or reputation are in themselves the most needful things, but when one acts or speaks in the sphere of politics, the element in which all meaningful action and the great bulk of thought takes place, they are the heart of prudence. In order to protect his own generalship which was

distrusted as much as Timotheus', Isocrates developed an art which shared the poets' strength without its degradation into mere cosmetics covering baseness. This is his strength and it is the reason why his most fabulous speeches are his most important and why we must take his myths even more seriously than his exposition. It is through them that he expresses just those truths that would have led to his real trial if he had not exercised his marvelous caution.

The epideictic speech, which is the most fabulous of speeches is the vehicle for the most serious thought. The epideictic speech has an appearance of vanity and is but empty display. But because of the vanity of men, its own vanity becomes the expression of the political problem of philosophy. The mode of the epideictic speech in its instruction is developed in the curious dialogue at the end of the Panathenaicus. After the speech has been read, all the students, save one, applaud with approval as does the audience at epideictic recitals.⁵⁴ They are pleased by the myth which glorifies their city and, by association, them. They enjoy the esthetic qualities of the work and are as it were enchanted by it. One student is led to reflect on the speech and makes some relatively profound remarks about it. The response to this sort of oration is dual--it pleases the many and makes a few wiser. The distinction is the common sense one between those who accept the myth and those who ask questions--the almost inevitable distinction between the ordinary and the intelligent. The former are gratified by the myth; the latter are led to find out what is inadequate about the myth--such eternally are the roots of philosophy.

⁵⁴Panathenaicus 233 ff.

The student says that Isocrates called the students together to hear the speech because he wanted to test them, to see whether they remembered what they had learned in their association with him and whether they were true to philosophy. The students had learned how to judge types of speeches and Isocrates wanted to know if they continued to do so. Isocrates chose in his prudence to please the Athenians but at the same time wanted to retain in one way or another the dignity of the Lacedaemonian way of life, to present the truth about both ways of life. He wished to instruct the susceptible as well as please the intransigent, so:

Seeking such an effect, you easily found two edged arguments no more appropriate to praise than to blame, but susceptible to double interpretation and provocative of much dispute; the sort which, when they are used in cases about contracts and unfair gains, is shameful and no small token of depravity, but which when employed in discussion (*διαλεγόμενον*) about the nature of man and things is noble and philosophic.⁵⁵

This is quite similar to the intent of Socratic dialectic--to hint at, to point at, to arouse, to recreate the insight, to transform words into experience. It is the same sort of technique as that used in base rhetoric but it changes its character when put to the service of discussion about the nature of things. It incites men to the noble disputes about *τὸ εἶναι* that dialectic implies. The speech is not dialectical but it is an incentive, an aid to dialectic. As we have seen the Panathenaicus does actually do much of what the student says it does do. It criticizes Athens severely and praises Sparta, if not so strongly as the student says, to the extent of preferring its political order to that of Athens. The

⁵⁵Panathenaicus 240 (cf. Evagoras 74).

student has not seen all but he is on the right track. Since men do not like to be criticized but love to be praised, the thing to do is praise them. And Isocrates does this for the Athenians. Of course, a thoughtful reader will see that a criticism inheres and that the praise is actually of things which if uttered in direct form would anger his audience. The man who recognizes the criticisms of Athens' conduct can also on further investigation discover why Isocrates thought she was defective--her politeia--and he can even learn about the tyrannical pre-conditions for the establishment of a good politeia. All is clear, but about the substance is a cloak of reticence. And this is only an inch beneath the surface. The speech ranges in subject matter from poetry to the nature of the gods; but one must think to discover--as is the case with any true understanding.

Isocrates, in the Antidosis, tries to show by separate quotations from diverse speeches that he is both patriotic and morally critical; this to defend himself from the charges respectively of training tyrants and corrupting the youth. In the Panathenaicus he shows how both purposes can be served at the same time even when the two are incompatible, i.e. patriotism and philosophy. The student says about this:

To those who read it casually it will appear to be simple and easy to understand, but to those who study it carefully and attempt to see what has escaped the others, it will appear difficult and hard to understand, packed with a great deal of investigation and philosophy, and full of subtlety and false argument (ψευδολογία), not the sort that those with evil intent use to hurt their fellow citizens, but the sort used by those able to benefit by educating or able to please their audience.⁵⁶

⁵⁶Panathenaicus 246.

At the beginning of the Panathenaicus Isocrates implies he is going to use false argument and myth (*ψευδολογία καὶ μυθώδης*)⁵⁷ so that the student can hardly be all wrong.

As the capstone to all this comes a statement at the end of the speech which is in Isocrates' own name:

I wish to praise those of my hearers who applaud this speech and who believe that instructive and artful (*διδασκαλικούς καὶ τεχνικούς*) speeches are more serious and more philosophic than those written for display (*ἐπεδείξεις*) or the courts, preferring also those speeches which aim at the truth rather than those seeking to mislead the opinions of their hearers, and those that rebuke our failings and admonish us rather than those spoken for pleasure and favour. I further advise those who think the opposite of these things, first not to trust to their own understandings nor ought they to think the judgments of the easygoing are true. Finally they should not precipitously publish about things which they do not know, but ought to wait until they can be in agreement with those who have much experience *τῶν ἐπεδευκνυμένων*. No one could ever consider foolish those who so govern their intellects.⁵⁸

Isocrates denies that the speech is epideictic and says that it is for instruction, which means that our notions about what speeches should fall under those heads should be revised, not only speeches like the Peace advise but also the Panathenaicus, and, by extension, all the so-called epideictic orations. Secondly, this speech, although full of false argument aims at the truth rather than seeking good repute and directs more than it pleases. This would seem fantastic and unbelievable if it were not for the dual character of such speeches. (And it can easily be understood how this sort of speech is able to convey more of the truth than the speech which says as much as can be said directly and is not by its nature able to lead some on and hold off others. Plato said it best of all:

⁵⁷ Panathenaicus 1.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 271-272.

. . . and in the same way he must understand the nature of the soul, must find out the class of speech adapted to each nature, and must arrange and adorn his discourses accordingly, offering to the complex soul elaborate and harmonious discourses, and simple talks to the simple soul. Until he has attained to all this, he will not be able to speak by art. . .⁵⁹

The epideictic speech is the complex phenomenon that fits all souls.) Thirdly, this passage tells those who do not know how to read such speeches in what way they can make a beginning. And, finally, Isocrates settles the whole issue by pointing to the true judge of these matters, the man experienced in epideictic speeches--himself.

To give added weight to these conclusions it may be observed that in the Helen Isocrates states all the principles by which he justifies political oratory (attacks on the disputers, the necessity of turning to the study of the things in which they govern themselves) and says that speakers must turn to important subjects. Then he with pride gives an example of his own work. A more epideictic speech could not be imagined and it is often said in commentaries that it is a fairly trivial speech. But such it is and Isocrates considers it important, justified by his principles. No such solid justification is given for any other speech including those that seem so weighty. I can think of no instance in which Isocrates says so clearly, "this is what I do."⁶⁰ It is not possible to take the introduction to the Helen seriously without interpreting at least as, if not more, intensively the myth, because it is the product of the general rules enunciated in the introduction. The myth of the Helen is the politikos logos in a higher sense than the Areopagiticus.

⁵⁹Plato, Phaedrus 277.

⁶⁰To see the importance of the epideictic speeches was not unknown in antiquity, an article by Harry M. Hubbell entitled

Until it is fully understood how a myth like the Helen can be the representative work of a man who has turned from meaningless things to the study of the greatest political things, it is folly to say that one has understood what rhetoric means to Isocrates.

C

There are two epideictic speeches which discuss philosophy and are not directed to the persuasion of Athens or tyrants, the Busiris and the Helen. They appear to be works which have to do with questions interior to philosophy rather than with any particular political goals; they are examples of the good rhetoric, written as critiques of bad rhetoric. It is to them that the interpreter must turn if he wishes to find the clearest exposition of Isocrates' theoretical position that he was willing to commit to paper.

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The very title of the Busiris reveals much about its character. It is striking that Isocrates should choose to praise one of the most detestable and contemptible figures of antiquity, a man who stood for nothing but evil, whom Virgil regarded as the standard of the unpraised man.⁶² It is thus that Isocrates can be counted

"Isocrates and the Epicureans," Classical Philology, XI (1916), 405, may be consulted. Although most of Hubbell's arguments are of a rather dubious character, his quotations from Philodemus, a first century B.C. Epicurean, are instructive. The central point is that although Philodemus rejected Isocrates' political orations, as is natural for an Epicurean, he thought epideictic orations were of great value for study and imitation, not for political but for philosophic reasons.

⁶¹The sections on the Busiris and the Helen are similar to running commentaries and will hence not have textual references unless otherwise necessary in order to avoid needless multiplication of citation.

⁶²Georgics iii. 3.

among those who have praised evil. He can however be excused on the basis that he is merely responding to a maladroit praise by another man. The other man is Polycrates about whose equity and misfortune Isocrates only knows from hearsay but whose works he has read with considerable disapproval. Isocrates feels that it is the duty of philosophers who have more experience and training to talk freely to those who are forced to make money from the study of philosophy. He brings his speech as a free gift to Polycrates who has presumably made money from his speeches. He would like very much to correct his views concerning philosophy as a whole, but since that could only be done in private conversation he has decided to write a letter correcting his gravest faults.

So the Busiris is a letter from one philosopher to another frankly discussing philosophy. However, Isocrates feels, for some reason, that he must hide his thought from others so that what will be clear to Polycrates will not be clear to other contemporaries, let alone the modern interpreter. He has purposely involved his meaning so that we must treat it most carefully. Further it is not altogether certain that he is perfectly direct in his discussion with Polycrates himself because Isocrates is aware of the hostility that criticism suscitates in its object and must try to appease that sentiment.

Polycrates has made an apology for Busiris and an accusation of Socrates. One can get some idea of Polycrates' moral orientation from this very fact--a praiser of pure evil and a slanderer of Socrates. An accuser of Socrates is almost of necessity, if he is consequent, a praiser of Busiris. It is an Alice in Wonderland,

upside down world, and Isocrates enters into it without quibbling. He does not question the objects of praise and blame but only says that Polycrates has no idea of how to praise and blame, that he has mixed up the two forms of discourse. Everybody knows that when one praises he must make the object of praise appear to be better than he actually was and just the reverse in accusation. Polycrates has done the opposite. Others who accused Busiris only said that he sacrificed strangers while Polycrates said that he also ate them. And in attempting to accuse Socrates, he said Alcibiades was his pupil. This is really an eulogy because everybody would agree that Alcibiades excelled over all men; and nobody ever observed that Alcibiades was educated by Socrates. This is the only place in his entire body of works that Isocrates mentions the name of his great master and it is in the terrible context of accusation. Although the Busiris is explicitly a work designed to correct the faults of Polycrates in both his praise of Busiris and his accusation of Socrates, the accusation of Socrates is no more mentioned and the reader is left to divine what Isocrates' own accusation of Socrates would have been like.

Isocrates' criticism of Polycrates is, in essence, that he has a perverted moral taste. He does not know what praise is; he thinks that brutal xenophobia is justified and admirable. Isocrates finds this shocking and thinks that Busiris, if he knew what Polycrates had said, would, no matter how he treated other people, be inclined to eat him. Isocrates is thus forced to give Polycrates a moral education; he must show what constitutes the really praiseworthy. If Busiris was a man who was potentially praisable, he

must have performed the actions to be ascribed to him by Isocrates. Otherwise he would be indefensible. And for this reason the Busiris is of capital importance; it provides for us in very open form in a discourse that is directed toward philosophical instruction and not political persuasion a yardstick for judging Isocrates' understanding of the good. It is a perfect praise and through it one can see what is the best way of life. The fact that Isocrates says the subject is not a worthy one does not mean that he minimizes the importance of what he is doing. He merely states that a praise of Busiris is not a serious thing; but noble deeds are serious and his praise is hence a discussion of the nature of the most important things.

Busiris was of the best birth, having descended from Zeus and Poseidon while his mother was Libya, a great female ruler. Thus he combined the best of divinity in his heritage and his race was such that even the women reached the highest levels of humanity in being able to rule. However he did not believe that the results of mere chance were enough to justify his existence but thought it necessary to leave an eternal monument to his own virtue. He therefore had contempt for his heritage in Libya and looked beyond to greater things. He conquered the kingdom of Egypt which he thoughtfully chose as the most favorable spot in the whole world for good government. It was an ideal location for an ideal government because it enabled its inhabitants to do without the aid of the inconstant Zeus. Only in Egypt, due to the Nile, it is possible to enjoy the plenty of a continent and have the defenses of an island.

This was only the material precondition for the creation of

a just order. A good life requires an adequate place in which to live it and sufficient food to support it. These are the sine qua non but they are not enough in themselves to produce a high standard of existence; they must be used in the ordination of a political community; they require yet the soul, the politeia, which can only come from the great founder. All of the good things will depend on the adequacy of the order given to all the elements of the city. And in this too Busiris did not fall short; his conquest of Egypt was only the beginning of his benefactions. He divided the people into three classes and this was the basis of the felicitous life of Egypt. The first class found its origin in the most obvious of sources--the provisions for the needs of life; it was composed of farmers and artisans. Now Busiris saw that the surest protections of this class are the practice of military virtue and piety. Hence, these two protective elements are the sources of the other two classes. A permanent class of warriors for the protection of the farmers was formed and piety was represented by the priests. Egypt was a wise combination of satisfaction of physical need, self-defense, and care of the gods.

After giving the rough outline of Busiris' ordinances in general, Isocrates proceeds to a more detailed account of the character of the function of each of these classes. He gives by far the most emphasis and space to the discussion of the priests and the piety which they represent. He treats of the artisans in the first place; the number of the citizens was limited to just the beneficial figure and never permitted to go beyond. The problem created by the disarray of Athens could never arise in Egypt. Far

more important however was Busiris' regulation that for each man there should be one craft, an ordinance which insured a superiority to Egyptian craft such as can be found nowhere else because of the dilettantish changeableness of other peoples. This solidity was preserved by a set of institutions which were so excellent that philosophers who wanted to speak about politics had to choose the Egyptian politeia as their model. Even more striking is the fact that the Lacedaemonians are the best governed of all peoples because they imitated one part of the Egyptian system.

And with this statement can be clearly seen for the first time the final standard which Isocrates applies to political things. It has become more and more clear that he does not simply judge of governments on the basis of his capricious judgment or the pressing needs of his own time but that he always admits that in order to know the good here and now the simply good must also be known. Lacking such knowledge, the present events are unintelligible; it would be impossible to know where one wants to go. In this tiny praise of Busiris Isocrates presents a marvelously simple sketch of a simply good social order, which renders meaningful the relative virtues of other social orders. As has been previously shown, Athens does not participate at all in the range of acceptable orders because it does not possess any of the requisite solidity to which political man aspires. At the same time, Sparta was seen to possess a certain limited dignity that made it the best of all existing cities. However, the criticisms to which it is liable are such as to make justice itself questionable. Isocrates here gives us an

account of that element in Sparta which commands respect but also explains the defective character of the Lacedaemonian politeia. It borrowed one element from a truly good politeia, and to that can be attributed its continuity and its force. The Spartans recognized that the city can only be protected and preserved by force and they thus copied the military regulations of Busiris. However this was only a subsidiary part of Busiris' institutions and if the Spartan militarism were universalized so that all practiced it there would be realized the oft' told tale of the war of all against all. The moral conclusion would be that justice is the benefit of the stronger and there would be an anarchy of principles. But Busiris' own politeia, although containing this necessary class of soldiers, was so constructed that the higher ends were preserved within it; his use of the military was as means to these ends; he did not become so immersed in the very evident need for force that he forgot it was a tool. Thus the politeia of Egypt is the incarnation of the possible identity of justice and the end of man, or, in other words, it proves that man can potentially be at home in the city. This is what Plato does in the Republic and the similarities between the solutions of the two men is striking. In this unprepossessing work, Isocrates gives the practical response to the question posed by the tension between Athens and Sparta. And we are forced to recognize that Wilamowitz erred when he said that Isocrates never looked to the pattern in the sky when he discussed contemporary political orders.⁶³ All his work implies that he did

⁶³Ulrich Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, Platon (2nd ed.; Berlin: Weidman, 1920), Vol. I.

and the Busiris hints, if nothing more, at the nature of that pattern.

What seems to be lacking in the Spartan order is the role that is fulfilled by the priests. Now although the priests are supposed to represent the piety that supports the political order they are not themselves represented as possessing that disposition. The priests are the men who cultivate wisdom and are responsible for Egypt's reputation in that regard. These priests are given plenty from the religious revenues and are given total leisure because they are exempted from all other civic functions. Their only virtue of which Isocrates makes mention is moderation. Living thus leisurely, moderately, and easily they are able to give themselves fully to their studies. For the body they found a tolerable science of medicine and for the soul they developed philosophy which has the power to lay down laws and investigate the things that are. This again is one of the most revealing statements Isocrates ever makes. He here defines the limits of philosophy as it ought to be practiced more precisely than any where else in his works. Philosophy is not at all earthbound according to Isocrates as it has often been presumed to be the case. Philosophy is just as legitimately concerned with the nature of the things that are as with human things. It is the all comprehensive science and in this carefully protected passage it can be clearly seen that Isocrates' seeming contempt for metaphysics has much of the rhetorical in it. The political function of philosophy is to lay down laws and presumably this function depends at least in part on the nature of the beings, at least it

was so in the case of Busiris.⁶⁴ Political philosophy has to do with governing men and not with making speeches. In all of this there is no mention made of making speeches. Philosophy is here conceived of in a sense that differs in no wise from that traditional sense that we seem to have inherited from Socrates and Plato. The only place where rhetoric is at home, as it appears, is in making defenses and accusations--in a certain relation between politics and philosophy--rather than in philosophy itself.

Of these philosopher-priests, Busiris assigned the older ones to the direction of the greatest affairs. Thus Egypt found itself under the rule of philosopher-kings and the perfect combination of philosophy and politics was there found. What Sparta lacked was the rule of wisdom which alone could have insured its justice. That combination of Athen's wisdom and Sparta's political genius which Isocrates sought can only be perfectly found in a city where the power is in the hands of philosophers. The simply good political solution is a city where there are three solidly established classes, one made up of artisans, the second of guardians, and the third of philosophers. The reminiscences that such a solution calls forth are too strong to need underlining.

The young priests were persuaded to leave the pleasures (just as Isocrates' young disciples of whose studies we are not told in the Antidosis) and to devote themselves to the study of astronomy and geometry. Now here we have an explicit approbation of these studies by Isocrates; they are the appropriate study for the best endowed of the young. The guarded statements of the Antidosis

⁶⁴Busiris had to know the nature of the cosmos in order to choose Egypt for his city. 12.

and the Panathenaicus which indicate that mathematics and astronomy may be defensible studies, are here completed by the positive statement that they are the appropriate ones; the proviso that they are not in themselves complete disciplines, that they are for the young, does not constitute a contradiction with Plato. These sciences are propaedeutic to philosophy, not identical with it. As has been previously remarked, the grudging remarks about geometry and astronomy actually have the effect of defending them. When Isocrates contemptuously says they are only good for the young, he thus insists that the city support them. Here he says exactly the same thing in a positive way. If it is true, as is often supposed, that the Busiris was written very early in Isocrates' career, then it stands in evidence of a remarkable continuity in his thought from the beginning to the very end.

The little praise of Busiris ends with a eulogy of Egyptian piety. This is one of the most important expositions which Isocrates makes because it gives a clear account of the status of one of the virtues. Piety is the care for the gods and it is one of the most important bastions of political society. Isocrates says that men who bedizen themselves with any virtue which they do not possess injure those who are deceived by them, but those who make the duties toward and the punishments from the gods seem more exacting and immanent than they actually are, are the greatest benefactors of human kind. For, those who first wrought fear in men were the causes of our not being totally bestial in our relations with one another. Thus Isocrates sees the community-held opinions about religion as salutary half-truths. Men must have fear of the eternal

order of things or they will be carried away by their passions. However the world is such that the duties of men are not clearly evident to the majority of men on the basis of their unaided reason. It is not always entirely clear that the just man is simply identical with the happy man. The experiences of successful injustice are too renowned for men to wait patiently for the rewards of goodness; civil society could not decently exist without some belief in a supernatural complement to earthly justice.⁶⁵ There is need of a certain noble fear before the greatness of the cosmos in order to insure the good behavior of the common run of men whose natural lights do not suffice. Hence Busiris was the defender of religion and forced his people to a great respect for the gods that made them the most pious of peoples. Isocrates treats of religion here as a tool for the support of good political order and as in no wise transcending this function. The myths of religion are not true, only salutary. This does not mean to say that contained in them there is not a core of truth about the nature of things which produces a sort of conduct more in conformity with it than that of a non-philosophic non-believer. But he does treat of the gods in a completely skeptical manner. The founder created a civil religion in which he did not himself believe; it is obvious that, for Isocrates, religion could not give an acceptable account of itself without the addition of reasons that are not religious in themselves: the needs of the city and the nature of man which are served by it are the bases of such reasons. It is evident that Isocrates does

⁶⁵Cf. Peace 34-35, 109-110.

not believe in any form of revealed or traditional religion. If he has any theology at all it must be of the natural variety.

Isocrates has said, in the Nicocles and the Antidosis,⁶⁶ that we were able to escape the lives of beasts only through logoi, or philosophy. If one were inclined to take this formulation seriously in relation to the Busiris, the result would be that piety was the political form of philosophy. In other words, the work of philosophy in the city is to elaborate and defend a reasonable religion which supports the philosophically conceived needs of man. The truth purely and simply would not be the business of philosophers in their political role but that reasonable compromise between truth and the powers of most men which religion represents. That this is so is shown by the fact that the philosophers in this good city of Busiris are priests. Its most distinctive characteristic is the piety which supports its order and the priests form the class which has exclusively to do with piety. Now it must be remembered that the priests are not represented as possessing piety themselves; their special virtue is moderation. They do not necessarily themselves believe in the religion of which they are the protectors. But their moderation leads them to temper their knowledge with their sense of the politically necessary. Philosophy is not equivalent to political judgment for it requires a mediating element, a control on its universality and its intransigence, it must learn to care for the particular and the changing. Moderation is the virtue that justifies philosophy in the city and protects

⁶⁶Nicocles 6-7, Antidosis 254-55.

it from the city's revenge. Moderation is the philosophic equivalent of piety.

Isocrates closes the praise of Busiris with an example of philosophic piety as it was learned in Egypt. Pythagoras, who first brought the whole of philosophy into Greece also was the most assiduous and most noticeable of all men in his practice of the sacrifices and the purifications. If he did not think this would benefit him with the gods, at least he was sure to be of good repute among men. He, like Isocrates, had remarked the piety of the Egyptians. And he did not miss the mark because all the young had a passion to be his students while their parents were more pleased to see them following Pythagoras than tending to their business. Pythagoras' piety was pure exotericism, but he recognized its value for society, and, perhaps more important, he saw clearly how necessary it is for the flourishing of philosophy. "Les hommes, fripons en detail, sont en gros tres honnêtes gens. Ils aiment la morale."⁶⁷ A lesson to be forgotten only at the peril of life by hardy innovators in morals.

Pythagoras, if he did not share the goals, at least employed some of the means of Tartuffe. A gentle hypocrisy is one of the consequences of the moderation learned from the Egyptian philosophers; they are noble liars. This is the central lesson which Isocrates teaches Polycrates.

After completing the praise of Busiris, Isocrates throws open again the whole question of the individual to whom it should in right be attributed. Bayle summarizes with considerable clarity

⁶⁷ Montesquieu, *Esprit des Lois*, Livre xxv in *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), chap. ii.

the overwhelming reasons that Isocrates has embedded in the work against its properly belonging to Busiris:

Il semble qu'on n'entre pas dans la pensée d'Isocrate, lors qu'on dit qu'il a fait le Panégyrique de Busiris. . . . il suppose en l'air, qu'on pouvoit décrire plusieurs belles actions de ce Prince, desquelles il confesse qu'il n'a nul Auteur pour garant; mais, il dit que l'orateur qu'il critique ne peut pas lui faire un procès là-dessus, lui qui avance sans aucune preuve bien des choses plus incroyables. Il ne nie point que dans la bouche d'un autre cette Objection ne fût bonne. N'est-ce pas témoigner qu'il ne se soucioit guere des intérêts de Busiris, & qu'il n'avoit en vue que de censurer un impertinent Panégyrique.⁶⁸

Isocrates specifically asks, and leaves open the answer to all others except Polycrates, for whom such a praise would be fitting and we are left with no resource except that of following the ancient scholiast who tells us that the Busiris is a hidden defense of Socrates. It is evident that the praise is pure fantasy insofar as it regards Egypt. He invests the Egyptian politeia with characteristics that are in general purely Greek and in particular purely Socratic. The politeia as praised by Isocrates need only be compared with the Republic and the introduction to the Timaeus to see how evidently this is a praise of Socratic politics.⁶⁹ The defense of Socrates is produced by a movement we have frequently observed in Isocrates. One can start with the lowest of passions or subjects, to develop them fully requires the understanding and the admiration of the higher things. In order to praise Busiris, one must finally use the standards of Socrates. If Busiris did not take account of the truths about political things which were found by Socrates, he could not be praised. It is almost as it were by

⁶⁸Bayle, Busiris, in Dictionnaire Philosophique, Note C (Rotterdam: Bohn, 1720).

⁶⁹Busiris made the Egyptians worship the lowest beasts. Think of the Socratic oaths like *μὲν τὸν κύνα ἀγροτῆων*.

accident that an attempt to praise Busiris leads to a defense of Socrates; in looking for praiseworthy deeds to bestow on him one finds that they are the very one's that Socrates stood for. This magnetic necessity which is shown by the movement of the discourse constitutes the genius of this defense.

Isocrates, as we have noted, criticizes Polycrates' accusation of Socrates because he said that Alcibiades' was a student of Socrates whereas nobody had ever observed that he had been educated by Socrates. However everyone would agree that he excelled over all. Now, in the first place, besides the fact that this statement is not even near to being factually true, it is contradictory to what Isocrates elsewhere says about Alcibiades; he was certainly not admired and respected by all men.⁷⁰ This statement serves as a defense of Socrates; it is exactly the same as that made by Xenophon.⁷¹ Isocrates does not say that he was not a companion of Socrates; he only says, not without wit, that Alcibiades never learned anything from Socrates. Thus, Socrates' thought cannot be held responsible for Alcibiades' actions; he did not prepare potential tyrants. If this is a praise of Socrates, then Isocrates is following his own rule of crediting the person praised with more good things than he actually deserves. Isocrates has elsewhere made a distinction between the many who admired Alcibiades and the few who did not. Those few will consider this as a praise of Socrates. Isocrates takes the side of Busiris and Alcibiades against Socrates,

⁷⁰ Cf. Philip 61 (for the style of this ambiguous passage cf. the same irony in Panathenaicus 117-118).

⁷¹ Memorabilia i. 2. 12 ff.

thus showing that those who praise Alcibiades must praise Busiris or injustice; the activities of Alcibiades represent a certain conception of political life that implies the radical inadequacy of justice and the justification of ambition. A man who admires this position would, if he were consistent, be led to admire also a lawgiver who set down his laws in the greatest injustice--Busiris. According to Isocrates, it was the Athenian multitude which admired Alcibiades. It was this same multitude which condemned Socrates. He cannot then praise Socrates before them and so praises Busiris; but the result is that to praise Busiris implies to praise Socrates. Thus a condemnation of Socrates would mean that the inhumanity of Busiris is the political view of the Athenians. They are in contradiction with themselves; if they prefer Alcibiades to Socrates, they cannot accept this praise which is so reasonable. Their injustice is shown; they do not necessarily see this; they are satisfied with the decency of the praise of Busiris and also content with an accusation of Socrates. But the few, and Isocrates proclaims that he is hiding his thought from the vulgar, who do not respect Alcibiades will know after reading the Busiris that Socrates stood for piety and realize that to condemn his principles means to accept an understanding of things that makes political life undesirable. The Busiris begins with an internal contradiction that is not visible to the vulgar but is clear to the thoughtful. Alcibiades is praised but the bestiality of Busiris is not considered praiseworthy. The only way this contradiction can be resolved is by restituting Socrates or, in other words, politics is fundamentally imperfect without Socrates and his principles.

At the end of the praise, Isocrates amplifies his criticism of Polycrates' praise of Busiris. He not only praised him for bestiality but also for having done things that can only be properly done by the gods. Busiris was guilty of insolence towards the gods in not respecting the order of nature; he diverted the Nile from its course. Thus Busiris was guilty of two crimes: destruction of men and insolence toward the gods. These two charges are roughly parallel to the charges that we know were made against Socrates--corruption of the youth and bringing new gods into the city (or not believing at all in the gods). Busiris' conduct as alleged by Polycrates is the same as Socrates' as alleged by Anytus. Isocrates answers this by saying that he himself praises Busiris only for things that a gentleman would do such as the institution of laws and politeiai. Hence, by praising Busiris with the standards of Socrates, Isocrates succeeds in defending Socrates at the same time. Busiris was considered praiseworthy for having done things for which Socrates was condemned to death; Isocrates admits that such conduct was condemnable but says that Busiris did not actually do the things for which he was praised. He praises him with the real activities for which Socrates was condemned. In both cases Busiris and Socrates are identical; the only difference is that in the first case the two are viewed through the eyes of Polycrates and in the second through those of Isocrates. There is a tension in the first case because Busiris was praised for the condemnable acts of Socrates. Isocrates seeks to resolve that tension in showing that Busiris did not perform the acts for which Socrates was condemned. But in so doing he incidentally gives us

a representation of Socrates which proves that he was not at all guilty himself, so that the tension remains. One is shocked to see that Busiris is praised and Socrates condemned for the same ideas; the proof of Busiris' goodness must also awaken sympathy for the injustice done to Socrates. Hence those who condemned Socrates must really be praisers of Busiris and Alcibiades.

Substantively speaking, the philosophers who investigated the causes of things were judged to be impious, to be destroyers of civil society. They did not believe in the gods and called the moon a stone. They did not stay within the natural limits of things. The sacred veils which cover the sources of the things that are were lifted by these men and the limits that are posed by nature on men's conduct were violated. They thus were seen to act as beasts in not respecting the laws while trying to put themselves in the place of the gods. They were the corrupters of the youth. Isocrates shows that the Socratic variety of investigation is that of a gentleman and produces gentlemen. Philosophy is the support of the political order of things; he corrects a popular misunderstanding. This is the same defense of Socrates as that made by Plato and Xenophon. Socrates merely corrects the errors inherent in civil society while leaving it intact; Xenophon says that his only interest was that his disciples be gentlemen. Socrates was not the destroyer of the eternal order and its gods which are the sole support of the possibility of human justice. The problem of the presentation of philosophy as it was faced by the men of the heroic age which followed the death of Socrates is defined by Plutarch in this way:

For he who the first, and the most plainly of any, and with the greatest assurance committed to writing how the moon is enlightened and overshadowed, was Anaxagoras; and he was as yet but recent, nor was his argument much known, but was rather kept secret, passing only amongst a few, under some kind of caution and confidence. People would not then tolerate natural philosophers, and theorists, as they then called them, about things above; as lessening the divine power, by explaining away its agency into the operation of irrational causes and senseless forces acting by necessity, without anything of Providence, or a free agent. Hence it was that Protagoras was banished, and Anaxagoras cast in prison, so that Pericles had much difficulty to procure his liberty; and Socrates, though he had no concern whatever with this sort of learning, yet was put to death for philosophy. It was only afterwards that the reputation of Plato, shining forth by his life, and because he subjected natural necessity to divine and more excellent principle, took away the obloquy and scandal that had attached to such contemplations, and obtained these studies currency among all peoples.⁷²

The philosophers had to re-establish the position of their way of life or it would have been snuffed out. The problem was essentially one of proving their piety, for respect for the gods is the central bolster of the city; they had to show that their investigations were not contradictory to the belief in the gods. That is why the most important part of Busiris' legislation had to do with piety and philosophers were the priests. Isocrates goes further in proving his own piety. Polycrates was guilty of following

⁷²Plutarch, *Nicias* 16.

Voyez dans Plutarque, Vie de Nicias, comment les physiciens qui expliquoient par des causes naturelles les éclipses de lune, furent suspects au peuple. On les appella météorolesches, persuadé qu'ils réduisoient toute la Divinité à des causes naturelles et physiques, jusqu'à ce que Socrate coupa racine à tout, en soumettant la nécessité des cause naturelles à un principe divin et intelligent. La doctrine d'un être intelligent n'a donc été trouvée par Platon que comme un preservatif, et une arme defensive contre les calomnies des Paiens zélés.

Pensée de Plutarque, dans la Vie de Nicias: que Platon, en admettant un esprit supérieur qui gouverne le Monde, fit taire la calomnie, qui regardoit comme athées tous ceux qui soutenoient le mouvement régulier des astres et expliquoient physiquement les phénomènes célestes, qu'on appeloit météorologues. (Montesquieu, *Pensées* in Vol. II, *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), p. 1546.

the lies of the poets and was thus led to believe that the gods were capable of injustice. Those who uttered such blasphemies suffered for it and moderation about these things is to be advised. It is not permissible to legislate about other misdeeds and to pass over free speech about the gods but those speaking and believing the evil stories must be considered impious. Isocrates thus shows that he is on the side of the city in the battle against impiety. He himself believes that the gods are both good and powerful. He speaks just as does Socrates in the Republic.

Now it is evident that in spite of the conventional presentation, the Busiris contains a very radical doctrine. In the first place it is a defense of Socrates and hence a critique of Athens. It also shows that justice is not truly to be found elsewhere than within the politeia of Busiris, thus implying a certain loss of loyalty to all real existing regimes. But the most explosive of all is the attitude toward the gods. It has been remarked that the belief in the Egyptian gods was based upon conscientiously constructed myths and that the philosopher-priests were not themselves pious but rather moderate. There is a great difference between pious belief in and moderate acceptance of myths about the gods. And Busiris' gods are emphatically new gods; he chose a place where Zeus is no longer needed and the legislator could put himself in the place of the god. Isocrates' own accusation of the poets and defense of the gods follows exactly the same pattern. He does not suggest piety but moderation in regard to the gods and treats the beliefs about them as legal questions having to do with the health of the society. Furthermore, in

criticizing the poets he criticizes the only source of knowledge about the gods. He refuses to accept the commonly held beliefs about the gods; he substitutes his wisdom for the current divine accounts. This is as much as to admit that he does not accept the gods of the city, at least as they are understood by the city. The gods are understood in terms of some higher knowledge of the order of things, a knowledge not accessible to most men; the knowledge of the philosopher is the only reliable source for the truth about the gods. It is a clear break with the tradition; the movement of the speech is underlined by a praise of Orpheus in the beginning where the position of the city about Socrates is accepted and a denunciation of him at the end after the thread has been unraveled.

Thus Isocrates admits Socrates' guilt and his own from the city's point of view; they do corrupt the youth for those who understand them can hardly share the city's beliefs. But their guilt is not absolute because their revolt is in the name of something higher--simple justice as it was realized in Egypt. They are innocent in the eyes of those who are attached not to Athens but to the truth. The Busiris of Polycrates from being Socrates will become Athens. The Athenians destroy men unjustly and do not respect the natural order of things.

The Busiris is a speech about moderation; at the same time, its content is daring. Philosophy is daring and intransigent; it has the tendency to transcend, and thus render meaningless, the common sense and the ordinary. Philosophy must be brought back to earth and forced to consider human things in their possibility. Moderation is the virtue that accomplishes this feat. In this way

the speech is so controlled that only the most assiduous and thoughtful reader can understand its implications. It could not render disloyal a senseless man and the sort who understand are also likely to realize their duties to the existing order in face of the improbable actualization of the ideal. But they will learn standards for their own political lives and above all they will learn of the dignity of Socrates. It is this that moderation teaches and this speech is a moderate lesson in moderation. It is the noble self-control which the philosopher puts in the place of the credulous awe before the grandeur and mystery of the cosmos that is piety. It protects society, makes political philosophy possible, and protects the philosopher along with philosophy. It is the link between philosophy and the city without which philosophy would not be tolerated.

And it is here that the function of rhetoric finally becomes clear. It is the formalization of the truth expressed in the actions of Pythagoras; philosophy in order to be accepted by non-philosophic men has need of a mediating element which is not strictly rational. Rhetoric would not be needed if all men were able to see the naked truth; but the execution of Socrates as well as the easily observable folly of men are sufficient proof of this need. Philosophy needs a defense and an arm; the truth is not what will make the philosopher loved or trusted. Persuasion based upon the understanding of the good for men is the necessary political accessory of the philosopher. The philosophers in the city of Busiris were not rhetoricians but Isocrates in order to defend Socrates had to be. The need of philosophy for a rhetoric teaches in itself one

of the fundamental lessons about philosophy itself. Philosophy is a pursuit of the few; it must be protected from the many and the many must be protected from it. The vulgarization of philosophy would turn it into ideology and ideology would corrupt the political man's common sense understanding of things. Rhetoric is hence in reality on the highest level a science of the nature of man and an expression of the philosopher's political responsibility. Without some knowledge of the good, rhetoric would be meaningless; the city of Busiris must always be the ultimate standard. But the very impossibility of the realization of this city because of men's selfishness and viciousness as well as the lack of appropriate conditions must lead to a tempering and compromise which is expressed by the rhetorician's understanding of the particular and imperfect. The relativism of a political view that has no theoretical base is avoided without complete neglect of the non-eternal that pre-Socratic philosophy seems to have implied.

The Socratic contribution to philosophy according to this account would appear to be a defense of the political man's view of things against the view that all the political is but sham and cheat. The everyday understanding of things must express some truth about the nature of things. Hence the rhetorician's preoccupation with political things is justified. But at the same time the political good when fully understood implies a sort of society almost as far removed from what one finds in everyday life as are the atoms of Democritus. The city is natural but the existing cities are not. The Socratic doctrine has perhaps even more far-reaching effects than the others because it is a political doctrine

whereas the pre-Socratics simply rejected the city. The Socratics retain the just and lay a claim against the city in the name of justice itself. Society in some way recognizes the radicalness of this position and assuages its inquietude in revenge on the philosophers. The philosopher must then prove his loyalty to his fellows by proving what he wants is gentlemen in the full sense. At the same time, he wishes to preserve his understanding intact; hence gentlemen are defined as those who know what the beings are or virtue as knowledge. The conflict between the imperiousness of the present and the transcendence of philosophy finds its ideal expression in a rhetoric which gives its full due to the present but points the way to the higher for those who are able to follow it. The epideictic oration and the dialogue do this. They are not philosophy; they are propaedeutics to philosophy and to interpret them as one would a tract is to be sure of misinterpreting them. Until the situation in which "shameful speeches" had to be avoided because "philosophy was lying in the dust" is deeply reflected upon there can be no adequate understanding of Isocrates' orations nor, certainly more important, the dialogues of Plato.

Isocrates' ordinary orations may be conceived of as expressions of the prudent judgment of a Socratic as to the best course of action in particular cases. They need have no particular theoretical significance except insofar as they are founded on a sound view of the whole. One can distinguish the particular speeches from the final viewpoint of Isocrates because they are simply the advice of a wise man who proves his social responsibility by doing his civic duty. This is perfectly consistent with

the Socratic moderation which preserves the dimensions of the common sense world. Just as Xenophon wrote a history which could have been written by non-philosophic man (although its particular judgments are informed by the Socratic training of its writer) so Isocrates plays his part as a citizen. This is perhaps difficult for us moderns to understand because we do not make this distinction between practical and theoretical activity as did the ancients. This division of a man's life into two different spheres only tenuously related seems "inauthentic" to us. But this is just the reason why such studies as this are made; it is in the reason for the existence of philosophic rhetoric that the basis of this difference is to be found. It is because the spheres of practice and theory seem to be ultimately heterogeneous that rhetoric must bridge the gap between them. The important thing to be stressed is that the choice of rhetoric does not imply of necessity a rejection of true philosophy nor does the fact that a man did not discuss philosophic issues in the great bulk of his work mean he did not consider them. It only shows that such a man considered writing a political act and that perhaps he did not think his philosophy could be written. The epideictic speeches preserve the questions that make the ordinary solutions finally inadequate and lead to philosophy. It is thus that Isocrates can be placed among the number of those great men who made the defense of philosophy after the death of Socrates threatened its existence. He defended Socrates but ever so moderately, preserving exactly the proportions of things as they are to be found in life--the great mass of men and things cannot tolerate Socrates but his view illumines them all. Isocrates defended a culture which would be acceptable to all and would admit, in the extreme case, of a Socratic extrapolation.

In accordance with his political preoccupations, Isocrates presents as a rule a very dispassionate picture of himself. His identification with the ancient and the respectable seems to be unquestioned and he thereby gives witness to the Platonic indication that the political is unerotic. Isocrates gives the appearance of insensibility to the seductive charms of sex; his are the strictest standards of duty and self-control. Moderation is perhaps the most typical word that could be used to characterize his works; the atmosphere of voluptuousness and complete self-expression which is so attractive in certain works of Plato and Xenophon seems to be completely lacking in Isocrates and this is perhaps one of the profoundest, if only psychological, reasons for the modern unwillingness to class him among the true Socratics. There is frequently a certain partialness about Isocrates; one does not feel that he has grasped the whole range of human possibilities; one is tempted to think that his understanding of passion, art, and love is defective or altogether absent. Somehow or other humanity constantly eludes the definition of man as a political animal and is restricted by the simply moral. All that is represented in modern thought by Art expresses this problem. If anyone were to say that the beautiful is the politically beneficial he would be hooted out of the councils of contemporary wisdom, and there is no question that such a definition would inevitably lead to a great impoverishment of our artistic consciousness. Art, or something equivalent, is generally regarded as a-moral and free, expressing the inner depths of man. Men who are unaware of this sphere may be admirable

but we would hardly regard their view of things as satisfying. It is thus that, although Isocrates' moderation may be the reflection of Socrates' fright before the investigations of the philosophers and subsequent turn to the study of human things, he does not appear to have been inspired by the divine madness of eros.

Isocrates has given an exposition of the problem which exists concerning the arts, or culture, and political society. To briefly recall this argument which has already been analyzed, the needs of culture and those of politics are different. Culture feeds on luxury and political slackness while the city requires austerity and severe morality. From the city's point of view, a strict subordination and supervision of the arts is thoroughly justifiable; it was only in the shade of doctrines that attempted to prove a direct relation between the progress of culture and that of the city, that the arts could liberate themselves from this restraint. In modern times the arts, as the expression of what is specifically human in man, have an unlimited right of revolt against the claims of society. It goes without saying that all the Greeks would reject this right as unfounded and as giving freedom to arbitrariness and perversity. Art is for pleasure and all pleasures do not have an equal dignity; hence all forms of art are not equally acceptable. There is, however, no question about the fact that Plato saw certain aspects of man that were not strictly amenable to the city and that good taste for him could not permit a simple reduction of the beautiful to the politically beneficial. Plato preserved the philosopher's right to freedom from restraint in his understanding of the beautiful because he alone can distinguish between the truly

beautiful and the momentarily agreeable or the perverted because he has seen the true beauties. If the Gorgias and the second and third books of the Republic seem to subordinate the beautiful to the politically expedient, the Phaedrus and the Symposium are a sort of palinodeon to them.

Isocrates seems to be unaware of this problem or to resolve it by denying this element of transcendence; this is why he appears to be so earth-bound and some have been able to call him a humanist--that is to say he makes everything depend on the comfort of man, even the invincibility of the passions. It is thus that we turn to the Helen with the greatest of interest when it is discovered that this speech is a praise of immoderate passion and treats of exactly the same subjects as the Phaedrus--rhetoric and love. In this tiny work the words καλός and έρως appear more often than they do in all the rest of the orations taken together. The Helen is often mentioned by the interpreters because its introductory paragraphs deal with the problems of rhetoric and it seems to be one of the most important statements concerning the subject; however the myth itself is most often left unmentioned in spite of the fact that the statements on rhetoric are merely introductory and can only properly be understood in the light of the perfect rhetoric as represented in the body of the discourse. Now it is just this that makes the work so curious, because a moment's reflection would reveal that its first and second parts seem to contradict one another if the current interpretation of Isocrates is to be maintained. If the rhetorical theory of Isocrates were simply meant to encourage political orations as they are today understood and solid men of

enlightened practical goals, then it would be difficult to comprehend an epideictic praise of Helen as its natural result. It can hardly be objected that the Helen is an early work, for even if that were true, it is evident that the principles contained in it are the same as those on which Isocrates was still insisting at the end. The Helen is a capital example of how much our natural interpretation of Isocrates is based on preconceived notions as to what rhetoric actually is; the great differences between what appear to be his thought and that of Plato are in large measure the result of these prejudices.

The introduction to the Helen takes to task those who deal with the favorite themes of the eristics; it accuses them of speaking absurdities which are already long out-dated since the pre-Socratics had exhausted the extremes of fantasy in that regard. It were better to occupy themselves with the pursuit of the truth and to educate their students in the political things since it is better to conjecture about important things than to have accurate knowledge about useless things. However, these men are only interested in making money from their teaching and such paradoxical themes are efficacious in that regard. To prove their seriousness, these men should undertake the great themes and exercise themselves concerning problems which are really difficult to speak on.

This statement implies that the investigations of the pre-Socratics have been proved useless and that one who persists in following them is only wasting his time and must inevitably thereby lose the propositions of reality. Such a man will praise salt and bumble-bees; Isocrates insists that only by concentrating on

the difficult problems as they appear to man can any serious knowledge be attained. This is in the line of his didactic technique which consists in making his students learn by working out the problems involved in important subjects. He rarely tells us where this will lead but there is no question that it begins in Socratic fashion from ordinary political preoccupations. Philosophy in its traditional sense looks childish on its surface and Isocrates refuses this practice of callow youth in favor of the sobriety of the gentleman. This concentration on the surface is always the most remarkable emphasis of Isocrates. He dissociates himself from that philosophy which was so vexed in his time.

It is with considerable surprise that one finds that the sort of subject which merits praise is a eulogy of Helen inasmuch as it seems to be an unimportant, mythical theme more befitting academic exercise than the expression of the most important ideas drawn from the most worthy of disciplines. But, nevertheless, the man who wrote about Helen is the most praiseworthy of all those who attempted to speak well; he, however, made the error of defending her which implies that she had faults whereas she deserves praise which is reserved for those surpassing in goodness. Hence Isocrates is forced to show what an adequate praise of Helen would be like and demonstrate his understanding.

Helen was, along with Heracles, the favorite child of Zeus who loved them both dearly but preferred Helen to Heracles insofar as he gave Heracles strength which can master others by force and Helen beauty which naturally rules over strength. Heracles had a life of contest and struggle while Helen one over which men contested

and struggled. She stood as the end to the uses of strength; strength is only glorious insofar as it is used in the service of beauty. Heracles represents the life of action at its best and it proves to be inferior to that of Helen who is the most desirable of beings. Now Helen's first conquest was Theseus who was the finest of men, possessing all the virtues; but in spite of his perfection he was so carried away by her beauty that he kidnapped her, despising all the dangers of Lacedaemon, and was willing to descend to Hades out of gratitude for those who helped him. Thus for Helen this peerless man was willing to defy moral decency and insult the gods. Isocrates makes it clear that for most men all of this would be an accusation; but because of Theseus' superiority this is rather a praise of Helen's great power. Moral law can be broken without shame in the case of transcendent passion and the very capacity to feel this passion is one of the signs of greatness.

In order to prove Theseus' grandeur, Isocrates gives an extended account of his heroic acts. In his very last speech, the Panathenaicus, he refers to this passage and speaks of its importance.⁷³ This reference occurs in the very central sections of the speech, those which deal with the institution of the ancestral politeia. This interconnection is a proof of the unity of Isocrates' work and his own sense of the continuity of his thought. It must further be recalled that he assimilates Theseus' deeds to his own.⁷⁴ In the Helen, it is brought into evidence that the simple morality is not quite sufficient to explain Theseus' or Isocrates' action.

⁷³Panathenaicus 126 ff.

⁷⁴Ibid. 138.

Theseus' establishment of a good political order was the result of his moderation (an indication which confirms the argument of the Busiris which seems to base political responsibility on that forgotten virtue); he would have otherwise made himself tyrant contrary to the principles of the just. But at the same time he was a man susceptible to the attractions of beauty and in the truly overwhelming case his moderation was for nought. It is not a question of the absoluteness of morality but only one concerning the case in which it can be rightfully transgressed; in the case of tyranny it would have been base but in that of Helen it was indicative of nobility. This man's passion for the beautiful and pleasant was very intense; in the case of the city he controlled it and was enabled to be a good ruler, but he did indulge it at the right time. There is no place where Isocrates so clearly identifies himself with and absolves conduct which is in contradiction with the virtues thus showing that the virtues, at least in their political connotations, are not exhaustive of the human potentiality. At the end of the first section, the indecision which Isocrates revealed about the possible justification of the tyrannical life and the tension between the laws of the city and the pan-Hellenism on the one hand and culture on the other discussed in the second section, hinted at this problem which finds its thematic exposition in the Helen.

One can imagine two sorts of life, that of the moral man devoted to the occupations of the city and that of the man who lives for his pleasure. Isocrates in principle identifies the truly pleasurable with the moral and thus resolves any problem that might

seem to be involved. However it is not always strictly evident that the satisfaction of human desires reasonably conceived is the same as the politically moral. Theseus' immoral love for Helen is a practical example of this and perhaps Socrates' love for philosophy is another.⁷⁵ Isocrates in the Helen gives his preference to erotic passion and seems to prefer it to moderation. The work takes the view of the private man and shows that Helen is worth more than any other goal.

As a result of this choice, Isocrates is forced to defend Alexander and his conduct, a relatively difficult task inasmuch as he represents traditionally the archetype of the sensual coward. But if his conduct is understood as that of a man who appreciated that Helen was the highest of goods, then it would be hard to regard it as contemptible; he was simply acting toward the realization of the most desirable of goals. Alexander was chosen by the gods to judge a contest over beauty, so that he must have been among the wisest of mortals; he chose beauty because that was what the gods themselves fought about. The political consequences of his acts and the hostile judgments of those who fought him should not influence us in our understanding of the merits of this man. Hence Alexander whose life from a political point of view was despicable finds himself with one stroke cleared of his ill-repute; it is enough that he was a shrewd judge of beauty. The moral distinctions pale in the light of this characteristic.⁷⁶

⁷⁵Isocrates says that although he will be criticized he will praise Theseus for his pleasure. I believe this is the only place where he speaks of his own pleasure, thus showing his orientation in the work. For the difference cf. Panathenaicus 74-75.

⁷⁶This passage can be viewed as another link in the chain of criticism of Homer. He did not appreciate the dignity of beauty and

Alexander's judgment was seconded by the suffrages of the Greeks, the Barbarians, and the gods. For the sake of Helen they all made a war like no other that has ever come to pass. They were overcome by eros for labors on her behalf; the gods were willing to let their favorite sons die rather than not participate in this war and the Greeks and Barbarians were not willing to leave off until it was decided who was to possess her. For they were not fighting for the sakes of Alexander and Menelaus but for Asia versus Europe. They knew that in whatever land Helen resided happiness would reign. And they were not fooled in this respect since Greece, after its victory, knew its ascendancy over the Barbarian nations. If one recalls the main emphasis of Isocrates' distinction between Greek and Barbarian, he can begin to understand the meaning of Helen. It was philosophy that made the Greeks excel. In the Panathenaicus the Trojan war was carried on for Helen in word only but in deed for the whole of Greece.⁷⁷ In the Helen this notion is expanded and it is shown that the good for which the whole of Greece fought was beauty, that they were under the spell of a sort of erotic passion the fulfillment of which led to its flowering. The cause and end of the war was then indeed Helen if she is properly understood. Otherwise this struggle would have been fought in the shadows of senselessness and have left no mark on the future. The pan-Hellenism of Isocrates is a capturing of the beautiful on the level of action, an understanding of how the beautiful can be brought

the man who can judge it.

⁷⁷Panathenaicus 80.

into reality within the realm of politics. This does not mean to say that a pan-Hellenic war would be the most valid or the most effective way to appreciate the beautiful; but such a war does gain its significance from this motivation on the part of its authors. This accounts finally for the difference in tone between the pan-Hellenic speeches and those on the city. The former are illumined by the transcendent light of eros. Thus the two figures who represent the two aspects of the political interest of Isocrates can be comprehended by the romantic passion, Agamemnon who sought to regain Helen and Theseus who was a man capable of being deeply enamoured of her but who used moderation toward the city. Isocrates' political action is a political modification of his desire for the beautiful. The city is not strictly amenable to it and requires the addition of moderation, but the Theseus, the legislator, must have been under the influence of the spell to inform his legislation with that higher flame. The pan-Hellenism offers more scope for its expression because it goes out of the city and interests itself in the difference between Greek and Barbarian which is Helen herself.

But the pan-Hellenism also remains external and does not abide with Helen herself. It is when we approach the third level of Isocrates' interests, his art, that we see a more direct approach to her.

For she participated to the highest degree in beauty which is the most august, honorable, and divine of the things that are. It is easy to recognize its power; for, of the things which do not participate in courage, wisdom or justice many will appear to be honored more than each of these, but we shall find that nothing unendowed with beauty satisfies us and that we despise everything except insofar as it shares in this

idea. Virtue itself is esteemed mostly because it is the most beautiful of practices. One can appreciate how much it excels over all the other beings from the way we are disposed in regard to each of them. For we want only so much of other things as we have need and we trouble our souls no further with them. But eros for beautiful things arises in us, so much stronger than our will as the object is itself great. And, while we envy those distinguished for understanding or anything else unless they attract us by daily benefit and thus force us to love them, as soon as we see the beautiful we are well disposed toward them. Not only do we tirelessly pay them court like gods, but we find it more agreeable to be their slaves than to rule over others; we feel more gratitude to those who enjoin much than to those requesting nothing. While we reproach all those who are dominated by any other force and call them flatterers, we consider those enslaved by beauty to be lovers of the beautiful and industrious. We use so much piety and forethought in regard to this idea that we dishonor more the beautiful persons who sell themselves or permit themselves to be seduced than those who violate the bodies of others. And those who protect the flower of their youth, making of it as it were a temple not to be entered by the base, we honor for future time just as those who do some good for the whole city.

And what need is there to waste time discussing human opinions when Zeus, master of everything, manifests his power in all other things but deems it right to abase himself when he approaches beauty. For, likening himself to Amphytrion he came to Alcmene, as a shower of gold he joined himself to Danae, and becoming a swan he escaped into the bosom of Nemesis, and again under the same form he slept with Leda. He always hunts this nature with art rather than force.⁷⁸

The beautiful is the most important of all things and the virtues are only desirable insofar as they participate in this idea. There are some things which have nothing to do with the virtues but are more highly regarded than they because of their beauty. It is a long road that Isocrates travels from the Demonicus where the virtues are all that is of any worth to the Helen where they are admired, along with other things, because they are beautiful. There seem to be two ways of looking at virtue in Isocrates; the first is

⁷⁸Helen 54-60.

from the social point of view; man is a social animal and to live in common with his fellows there are certain traits he must possess, such as courage and justice. If man's end is truly identical with the end of political man, then the virtues are natural parts of a man just as is his body. You can no more imagine a political man as desirable whose morality is defective than a physical man as desirable whose body is defective. The second point of view seems to start from a private or personal interpretation. One could not imagine a decent human being who was a cut-throat, an irretrievable debauché, or so cowardly he would not defend his children. Such a conception of man shocks our sentiments as well as it would render such a being incapable of any thought or action. The very fact of living implies a certain amount of character and to live well requires a great deal. These two different approaches to morality lead essentially to the same consequences; the virtues are praised and encouraged. However this is not quite sufficient to overcome the conflict between the two; they start from such different points of view they are bound to disagree on crucial points, for example the case of Theseus and Helen. Since the end of the personal view point is beauty and Helen was beauty incarnate, the rules of justice and temperance were subordinated to her possession. The morality of the city is much sterner and bears no exception; in it the duty to one's neighbor comes before the right to one's own satisfaction. In the questions that are the most vexed the two moralities are likely to give divergent answers. They seem to arise from separate spheres of human potentiality, the one belonging to the political man, the other to the erotic man. But the two are not

easily separable. In particular instances the city can be understood completely without the erotic man's point of view; however the morality of the city most often, and in its most convincing instances, appears as a protection of the collective egotism of its citizens; it rules over others unjustly. The consequence of its laws seems to be constant war among men and virtue seems to be military virtue. An attempt to work out political morality simply on the basis of the preservation of the social order would mutilate man to such an extent that he would be nothing but a soldier as Sparta proved. The city must make an appeal to other principles in order to make itself really compatible to man. It must introduce beauty into its system as was done by Busiris with the philosophers. The city cannot do without the beautiful; otherwise it would not be choiceworthy. But, at the same time, the erotic man would in all probability refuse the restraints which are necessary to civic life or at least chafe under them. He desires pleasure and the city has admitted its own defectiveness in needing him. There will be a constant tug-o-war between the liberated passions and the rigours of political life. One has the choice of remaining at the level of Sparta, which means a sort of brutishness, and the introduction of a perpetual tension and malaise in the city.

The nature of man seems to be obstinately dual, arising out of its capacity for the life of action and its capacity for the appreciation of the beautiful and all that it entails. But they are mutually dependant, the city unable to be human without some eros and the erotic man unable to live without the city and the intercourse with his brethren. But if one were to attempt to reduce

the one to the other, the beautiful would become political propaganda in the spirit of "no subtleties for me, but what the city most needs"; and if the passion for the beautiful were made wholly political it would justify tyranny in the spirit of Callicles. Hence the two are necessary to one another but at perpetual war. There are momentary balances between the two as expressed in the political activity of Isocrates. A city which establishes a sort of cultured virtuous class as its rulers approaches a standard which would diminish the intensity of the conflict, especially if the legislator were a man who appreciated the beautiful. And a pan-Hellenic war for the rectification of Greece's cities and learning satisfies the need for political virtue and the fulfillment of passion. But these are all more or less adequate compromises. In the Helen Isocrates opts for mad passion as the only complete life.

Everything else we want only for our needs but we want more, and more of the beautiful simply because it is so without any thought for ourselves. Eros is more powerful than the will and we become slaves to the beautiful although to nothing else. We will serve it loyally. And we have so much respect and piety for this idea that we dishonor those who sell themselves more than those who commit injustice against others. We honor those who protect the flower of their youth on the same level as those who do some good for the city.⁷⁹ One must give oneself completely to this idea and to do so is at least on the same footing with serving the city. This is

⁷⁹Cf. Xenophon, Memorabilia x. 1. 6-13. The example is the same as that of Isocrates and indicates the identification that he makes of wisdom with beauty in the Helen. The true moderation is defined by Xenophon as knowing how to choose a lover. Cf. Memorabilia iii. 9. 5.

exactly the same message as that of the Phaedrus which only admires the man who gives himself to love without afterthought. It takes place outside the city and showers contempt on the moderation of the city, or perhaps it would be better to say that it rejects a moderation that is not in the name of something higher.⁸⁰ A simply self-controlled man is unspeakably narrow and his moderation looks like cowardly temporizing and timidity. An admirable man must care for something and care for it passionately. And the only thing worth caring about is the eternally beautiful. Those who do not care will lead intolerably wishy-washy and contradictory lives. Only a rhetoric which so bases itself can be called a true rhetoric; the others are in the service of baser passions and the unjust needs of the city.

It is said that the man whom Isocrates criticizes as an inadequate praiser of Helen is Gorgias. If this is so, Isocrates criticizes him for not having recognized Helen's dignity. Gorgias was willing to defend Helen's conduct and the passions which she aroused; but he thought they were faults and justified her before the tribunal of the city's justice which means she is answerable to it. Gorgias accepted the mediocrity of the city and its changing standards. His rhetoric was hence faulty. This is the same picture of Gorgias as given by Plato. Gorgias is unerotic according to Plato and this is the defect in his teaching. And this is also the argument in the Phaedrus. Lysias is an accuser of love and a defender of physical comfort. It is no accident that it is in the Phaedrus

⁸⁰Phaedrus 256e.

that Socrates praises Isocrates. Their views on rhetoric and love accord perfectly. Unless rhetoric finds a standard outside of the city it is merely a slave and tool of it rather than its guide.

Helen is responsible for the arts and philosophy and this can easily be seen in the conduct of Zeus himself. He rules over all other things but he can be dominated by beauty. In order to win beauty, he always uses art and not force. Violence cannot win beauty, but only understanding and skill. The possession of beauty depends upon art and beauty is the final cause of art. The arts are not invented for the satisfaction of man's needs but man's needs result from his natural direction toward the beautiful. Any thought which attempted to base everything on man would be philistine and barren. Man is incomprehensible separately and apart from the beautiful and those who are most violently attached to it without thought about the consequences are the most human. Even the gods are not ashamed of their slavery to it and want their escapades to be sung by the poets. Shameless devotion to the beautiful is the surest way to immortality.

The argument of the Helen leads to the conclusion that Isocrates did indeed leave open one claim against the city and did regard it as possible that the best life is not that of the good citizen. The man who contemplates the beautiful and can re-create it in his art is at least as worthy. The self-interested sexual passion which is so powerful in men is the source of this passing out of the city because the good city does not recognize the right of private sentiment. This source, however, is shown to have an end that is no longer personal and which proves that eros, which seems

so gratuitous, is only the subterraneous longing for the eternal. To forget this divine urge would be not only to leave man unsatisfied but would also deprive the city of its ultimate purpose; the city would be entirely cut off from the eternal as the pre-Socratics said it was. Preservation would be its end and Sparta its type; the only satisfaction of eros would be tyranny. The city as it ordinarily exists produces Gorgias who leads to Callicles.

This right of revolt is not an unlimited one according to Isocrates. It is restricted to those who understand; beauty is an idea, a form that exists. It is not a result of the arbitrary creation of man, and although the eros of each human being is potentially capable of attaining its accomplishment in the truly beautiful, few actually do. The right to freedom is based upon possession of the idea; those who do not understand this will be punished as was Stesichorus. Being must always precede creation or freedom; one must learn the palinodeon which gives the key to this respect. Art is imitation and must follow nature; the charm of Homer is due less to his art than to Helen. Understanding of nature is the center of art and only insofar as it partakes in such understanding can it be beautiful. That is why philosophy is prior to and more important than art. The beautiful in art may sometimes exist in contradiction to the city but never in contradiction to philosophy.

The knowledge of the beautiful is at the root of the veritable moderation. In the light of the true beautiful and with the recognition of the impossibility of most men's reaching it, the philosopher understands that it is his duty to give to men the institutions and the myths which will enable them to live in their

unconscious way in as close contact with the beautiful as possible. It is not the moderation of fear and apathy; it is the direct consequence of caring very deeply and of having lived very passionately. Xenophon states Isocrates' thought when he says that the moderate man is the man who knows how to choose a lover.⁸¹ The real solution would be the city in which the philosophers who contemplate the beings rule. This was the great merit of Busiris-Socrates--he developed this solution.

But the philosopher's first devotion will always be to the beautiful and it will be only with regret that he quits the abode of Helen. This is not a result of his will although she gives great pleasure but due to the overwhelming force of nature. Helen dispenses punishment and reward. The rich must present her with statues and sacrifices as is pious; the philosophers must present logoi to her which is their form of piety. The educated must speak and think about love and the beautiful. Isocrates' school is a home of symposia.

Conclusion

It would be folly to attempt to resume a work like that of Isocrates and would be contrary to his own intentions. He must be read in his complexity and be allowed to teach his subtle lessons in his own way. The purpose of this study is less to provide an easy interpretation of him which will dispense the student from the unpleasant necessity of reading Isocrates himself than an introduction intended to clear away some of the obstacles which prevent

⁸¹Cf. note 79.

a modern reader from penetrating to the center of his thought. Time and changes in our preoccupations have caused us to forget some of the things that Isocrates assumed would be evident to all.

The problem of moderation and the rhetoric which is its product is probably the question in Isocrates the most alien to us and since so much of his work is a development of this theme he is one of the least appealing of the classical authors today. But perhaps it is just this lack of sympathy we have for him which makes it important to reconsider him at a time when all of humanity recognizes the importance of historical studies directed to the end of enriching our own alternatives which seem so impoverished. At one time this question of moderation was understood to be of vital importance and we have forgotten why. The causes of this loss cannot be discussed here, but it is to be suggested that perhaps if the question were re-opened, it might be found that it has great ramifications for us moderns. It is evident that it has to do with problems which interest us very much and cry out for answers, primarily with the relation of the thinker to society, his responsibilities and his rights. This was a problem which Isocrates thought through as deeply as any man who has ever lived. I do not imply that his answers are necessarily exhaustive nor that they are completely valid for our special times. But I do underline that his lack of attraction for us might be as well our fault as his; we may have well forgotten some of the ways to pose the questions as well as certain possible answers. It is at all events clear that the general interest of Isocrates conforms to many pressing modern problems and that we might have much to learn by making the effort to understand

him. It is just the problems that seem the least interesting in historical matters that are often the most revealing because they contain the elements which were peculiar to an age and no longer inspire curiosity in later ages. If we were to study history according to our tastes, we would see nothing but ourselves everywhere.

It is to be remarked that it is very difficult to find a philosophic discussion of the virtue of moderation in recent times; it is also in recent times that there has been almost no real political philosophy. The two phenomena are probably related: if there is no political standard outside of particular political orders, relativism is the inevitable consequence. If there were to be such a standard, it would necessarily differ widely from almost all existing orders which means that it is essentially theoretical. But, if there is no difference between theory and practice, if the good must always be practically realizable hic et nunc, it is impossible that there be any standards except the existing. Political philosophy then becomes ideology in the service of the actual state of things. This is the modern situation, a result of the desire to institute everywhere a good order regardless of the conditions and the belief that the real is the touchable or, to put it in another way, that theory is unreal. This leaves us with either a wild idealism braving every reality or a moral cynicism which justifies everything. And, worst of all, thought is the prisoner of whatever place it is to be found because it cannot break the bonds of the present.

Moderation and rhetoric in Isocrates are based on reflection about this very situation. They try to resolve the conflict between the critical distance proper to theory and the practical

consequences that political theory is meant to produce. Moderation is just the dividing line between practice and theory and rhetoric is the expression of the thinker's awareness that theory must undergo modifications to become practice and that the published word is not only thought but also action. It is only on some similar basis that action can be meaningful and thought possible. Without standards external to it, that is to say, theory, action is senseless. Isocrates developed this problem as fully as any other theoretical man in antiquity because he took the position of the practical man so seriously. The complex inter-relations of the two spheres are preserved in all their nuances in his works. It is in communion with him that we can be helped to recover at least one possible way to render rational action feasible and by an examination of his presuppositions we can see what sort of thing our contemporary theory would have to do to give us back the common sense world.